

SOUL CRISES

JAMES WILLIAM ROBINSON

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SOUL CRISES

OUR RELATION TO THE
GREAT WAR

BY

JAMES WILLIAM ROBINSON



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DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF
SECOND LIEUTENANT GEORGE BUCHANAN SMITH, M.A., LL.B.,
2ND BATTALION GORDON HIGHLANDERS
WHO FELL AT THE HEAD OF HIS PLATOON IN THE BATTLE OF LOOS,
SEPTEMBER 25TH, 1915, AGED 24 YEARS
AND
CAPTAIN ROBERT DUNLOP SMITH
33RD PUNJABI REGIMENT,
INDIAN ARMY,
WHO FELL IN ACTION AT BEAUMONT'S POST,
NEAR KILWA, KIVINJI, EAST AFRICA,
JUNE 10TH, 1917, AGED 24 YEARS
GALLANT SONS OF THE
REVEREND PRINCIPAL
SIR GEORGE AND LADY ADAM SMITH
D.D., LL.D., D.LITT.
UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
WHO ARE FACING THEIR SOUL CRISES WITH
SUCH SUBLIME FORTITUDE AND TO WHOM
I OWE MORE THAN I CAN EVER REPAY.

*They were "lovely and pleasant in their lives and in death they
are not divided."*

PREFACE

THE sermons in this volume have been especially addressed to young men. I send them forth practically as they were delivered. If they meet with a reception similar to that accorded their delivery I shall feel justified in consenting to their publication.

It is an honor to enjoy the friendship of young men, and during my ministry in the West I have been delighted with their generous response to the gospel message.

In the following pages I endeavor to speak faithfully to all, but I make a special appeal to young men. Western Canada is essentially a young man's country, and certain anxious parents "in the East," who have sons in the West, may be wondering whether their boys are remembering and respecting the claims of religion? To these anxious souls I would say, "We have some of the strongest preachers as well as some of the most enterprising pastors in the West. They have the young man and his needs at heart, and as a rule the response of the young man is beautiful to behold." Our most promising young

men are alive to two facts: the fact of Christ and the fact of temptation. The more loyal they are to their Saviour and King the more conscious they are of their need to "watch and pray." To every young man life is a series of tests. Daily we have to make choices. Occasionally we have to choose between good and evil, more often we have to choose between the better and the best. As young men

"We are living, we are dwelling,
In a grand and *awful* time."

We are facing a most critical time in the world's history as well as a most critical period in our own lives. Greater opportunities and graver responsibilities never faced young men. We are now in the throes of a world-conflict. The issues of this present war are tremendous. We are fighting for the elementary principles of justice and freedom. Into this war we have put our best and we believe we have not done it in vain. But there is a *greater* war—the perpetual war between righteousness and unrighteousness. In this greater war we cannot be neutral. We cannot even act the part of interested spectators. Our relation to it is vital and we must fight. Every worthy young man welcomes the opportunity. We are made for war and evil is our foe. The old order is passing away. What the new order will

be depends largely upon us. When the present crisis came upon us many of our brave fellows heard the call and marched away. They have given a good account of themselves. It is difficult to keep "heartbreak at bay" as we frequently read that some of our noblest Christian young men have been "killed in action."

Shall the generous contribution made by our brave brothers on behalf of the New Order be ignored? One of our boys writing to his parents says: "I hope Canada is preparing for the home-coming of her sons. We who have had our baptism of fire are different men and better men. But we fear these good impressions will wear away when the boys come home. We will be eager for diversion and there are so many temptations that I fear for the future of Canada unless she is purged and made ready for the home-coming of her sons."

In the face of such an eloquent appeal let us rally to the Christian Standard. Preparedness has become an international slogan. Moral and spiritual preparedness is primary and fundamental. Let us enter heart and soul into this great moral struggle by enlisting as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. To do a little towards creating an atmosphere conducive to victory is the aim of this volume.

I gladly acknowledge my indebtedness to the

Rev. W. J. Dawson, D. D., whose inspiring books I literally swallowed as a “teen-age” boy, and to all other masters who have written upon the subjects dealt with. I feel with Mr. G. K. Chesterton that “I am the man who with the utmost daring discovered what had been discovered before.”¹ With the fervent prayer that it may in some measure encourage and inspire young men in their soul crises this message is humbly sent forth.

J. W. ROBINSON.

Welwyn, Sask.

1918.

¹ Orthodoxy.

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SOUL CRISES

SOUL CRISES

CHAPTER I

FACING THE CRISIS

Lord, what wilt thou have me to do.—Acts IX, 6.

THERE is a certain study which can be made very interesting and which is very profitable. It is a study which appeals to all who wish to know the meaning and purpose of life, and to make the most of theirs. The study to which I refer is biography. We enjoy reading the lives of those who have excelled and while appreciating their respective merits we like to discover the hidden springs of their character. What was the secret of their success? What was it that led them on to greatness? In our perusal of the biographies of eminent men we encounter certain features which seem to stand out with more or less prominence. As we ponder the life of any man who has distinguished himself, and whom we regard as a hero, whether he be a hero-soldier or a hero-saint, we almost invariably conclude that he was a man of great natural ability.

In most biographies this aspect occupies a place

out of all proportion to other essential, but less congenial factors. It is doubtless quite in order to magnify the genius of the man who has played a conspicuous part in the progress of the world, but with all our love for the romantic we must not forget that it is untrue to life to magnify the genius and minimize the early struggles, the strenuous efforts put forth by way of preparation for life's work. It is this customary advertising of the brilliant achievements, to the almost total exclusion of any hint of a Gethsemane's agony or a Calvary's cross which has made ordinary people conclude that all great men have been favoured with a superabundance of natural ability. There is a partial truth in this statement, but it is not the whole truth by any means. The distinguished man may exhibit his talent with such grace and ease as to lead us to infer that he is one of those geniuses who are born and not made. But apparent as it seems in nine cases out of ten, history does not confirm this conclusion.

Despite the poetic strain in us which lauds the saying that, "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them," the diamond must be mined, and even when discovered, it must be ground and polished, and so with every man born with what we term great natural ability. It is my growing conviction that the big majority who distinguish themselves achieve greatness. They rise from the ranks and the most casual observer may acquaint himself

with the fact that a large percentage of the real heroes of the race owe nothing to the possession of the silver spoon. The secret of their success lies in something deeper and more fundamental than great natural ability. What we, in our complacent ignorance, delight to call great natural ability, these men of the order of the lion heart call by another name; and were they so disposed, they could open chapters in their history which would inform us that they knew how to "toil terribly." As we scanned those pages we would read of many a bloody sweat, and of many a cross patiently borne; until they emerged from the gloom in resurrection power, and the world was compelled to acknowledge their greatness.

Another feature which is easily discernible as we study the biography of the great man is, what many are pleased to term, his good fortune. The lines fell to him in pleasant places. He just happened to be there, and things invariably came his way. The whole cycle of events just seemed to wait to confer fresh honours upon him. The worldly-wise account for his fame by a study of astrology. He was born on a lucky day; he had a lucky star, and his whole story is summed up in his being more fortunate than his fellows.

It is the old story of luck, but luck is something with which he whom the world delights to honour never took time to confer. He was not hanging around with nothing to do in particular when all this good fortune arrested his attention and car-

ried him on to glory. No! He was a man with a mission; life had a meaning to him. He had a part to play, and whether good fortune smiled or frowned to that end he came forth; for that he had toiled incessantly; for that he had risked the loss of all. Others were around before he came upon the scene, but were unequal to the illustrious task. When he came, it was easily recognized that he alone was master of the situation. He was not carried there by luck or good fortune; he came to his own by the sheer logic of honest drudgery. Luck was an unknown word in his vocabulary. He tarried not for good fortune; nor feared to face bad fortune, but through good report and evil he kept on his lonely way.

There are those who seem to partition time off into lucky and unlucky days, who shun superstitious omens, and believe in lucky stars. One or two things about these people I have observed. Luck is the forlorn hope of the man who was born tired, and who has never conquered his inertia. Luck is the creed of the morally bankrupt. Luck is the god of the spiritually blind, who eventually find themselves in the ditch. Luck sounds very romantic; and is, in fact, quite as romantic in its rewards as in its promises. It promises something for nothing and eventually its votary dies. On his tombstone write, "This is a man who for forty years was always going to do something; but who was waiting for something to turn up, and lo! here he lies in a pauper's grave."

The secret of renown lies in something more fundamental than natural ability; in something more reliable than good fortune; it lies in the birth of a single strenuous purpose in the soul. Before the advent of an all-controlling purpose, great natural ability and good fortune pale into insignificance. Such is the potency of an idea, such the power of purpose! When a man comes to a crisis, faces the issue, and chooses to do the one thing worth while, he has clothed himself with a power before which time and death are impotent. The man without a purpose is like a ship without a rudder: he has no aim in life. He is simply drifting on the high seas, and when hailed by a passing ship, "Whither bound?" he answers with a laugh of derision, "Nowhere in particular; out for a good time." Such a life is bound for the rocks.

An imperative question for every young man standing on the threshold of life to ask is: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Such a question is evidence that we have awakened to the greatest issue confronting the mind of man. The words of our text ring with genuine interest for us because they mark the crisis in the history of a soul. Saul of Tarsus was certainly a young man of more than average ability; he was the very essence of devotion, and withal eager to succeed. Fortune smiled upon him, and it seemed as though nothing could hinder his ascent up the ladder of Rabbinical fame, when, lo! a light appeared on the highway of life:

he saw a face; he heard a voice, and all was changed! Here his Pharisaical career terminated. Here he exchanged the path of persecution for the path of martyrdom, and with the cry, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" he pledged himself forever the bond-slave of Jesus Christ.

Will any of you dare to suggest that he made a mistake? No man ever makes a mistake, no matter how favourable his chances of promotion, or how certain his fame, who, with a glorious abandon, throws policy and caution to the winds and with grim determination cries, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Sometimes we have to choose between good and evil, and sometimes we have to choose between the better and the best. There is fame, and there is immortality. Fame awaited Saul as a Rabbi, but the Rabbis, even the greatest, have passed off the stage and their greatness is a memory; while St. Paul who was entrusted with the future of Christianity grasped the situation, and proved himself its master by overthrowing paganism and conquering the world. St. Paul lives to-day, and easily takes his place at the head of that noble line of heroes and martyrs of whom the world was not worthy.

In asking you to consider a few features of his remarkable life, I beg no pardons, for I ask you to behold a man: a man who was transformed by the living Christ and transfigured by the power of purpose. I want you to come with me along the Damascus road; that road which is symbolic of re-

penitence toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. I want you to see this prostrate man, pale and trembling, with a great fear in his heart, intensified by the conviction that he has been living at cross-purposes with God, lifting his face heavenward, and I want you to hear him in a subdued voice say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He is a conquered man. How truly he could enter into the experience of another who cried, "O Galilean, Thou hast conquered." He is a resolved man. He has come to an irrevocable decision. He volunteers his services. He wants to do something for the Lord. What can he do?

If you and I had looked at that prostrate form we would have asked him to stand up. We would have taken a mental survey of him and then we might have confessed, "We wanted you for an apostle, but your appearance is against you." It was quite true, at least in so far as tradition can be trusted, and St. Paul confirms this conclusion. His appearance was against him. Speaking of himself Paul says, "Who in presence am base among you." "His bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible." St. Paul's appearance was certainly against him. He was undersized and he was weak-eyed, but he was not weak-kneed. In that little frail body, often racked with infirmity, there slumbered the soul of a giant. If this young man had come up before many of our modern church courts, offering his services as a minister, I'm afraid he would have been rejected.

A few generations ago a young man presented himself as a candidate for the Christian ministry. He was rejected by one church but he tried another. He was none other than Dr. Joseph Parker who began life as an assistant to a mason. Speaking of himself he said, "I early reached the conclusion that God intended me for something higher than carrying bricks." Dr. Parker was a prophet in his day and generation, and he being dead yet speaketh. What happened to a spiritual giant like Dr. Parker has, doubtless, been experienced by many others.

In asking the most momentous question of your life, you may wonder what you can do. In appearance you may have a distinct advantage over St. Paul. Healthy in body and supple in limb; well proportioned, strong in muscle and graceful in bearing. A good appearance is not to be despised. It is a great asset. If your appearance is against you you may be conscious of a serious handicap, but do not be discouraged. Make your disadvantage a ladder.

A weak appearance may be glorified by God, and suffered by man, but not so discouragement. Discouragement is a sin which must be dealt with in its early stages or all is lost. Discouragement acts like lead around the body of a strong swimmer; it weighs him down out of sight. Appearance is a serious factor in daily affairs, but when compared with the power of purpose it is a minor detail.

As we interview Saul regarding his attainments we quickly conclude that he is a talented young man. He was born in Tarsus of Cilicia. Tarsus was a city of wealth and culture. After receiving a liberal education in his native city, Saul went up to Jerusalem to receive further instruction from the renowned Gamaliel. There he distinguished himself, and prophecy was rife as to his even surpassing his brilliant master. Naturally a student and burning with a thirst for knowledge, it seemed as though nothing would prevent him becoming the greatest scholar of his time. Scholastic fame was within easy reach. But on the road to Damascus he experienced a change which led him to break forever with the past and with a vision of the true meaning and purpose of life he cried, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

When we turn from the consideration of St. Paul's personal appearance to his personal attainments we instinctively feel that the tables have been turned. We are standing in the presence of an intellectual giant who commands our admiration. Without question we acknowledge ourselves in the presence of one who is our superior. But while we revere him, let us not get benumbed in his presence; for he too had a beginning. When he asked this question he was an untried man.

Until we set ourselves bravely and persistently to the task we never know what we can do. Most men who have distinguished themselves in life have been almost as big a revelation to themselves

as they have been to other people. Therefore while conscious of our limitations let us recognize that we belong to the same order of life as Socrates and Seneca, Handel and Shakespeare, Luther and Lincoln. Every life has a mission and "who knoweth whether thou art come to the Kingdom for such a time as this?" We all have talents for something, and I am not concerned about ascertaining the precise nature of your talents: what I am concerned about is this, Are you willing even now, to dedicate them to God?

Recollect, before you can hope to have the talent of achievement you must utilize the talent of preparation. To every aspiring young life I would say, Have you the talent of application and the talent of perseverance? If you have you are possessed of omnipotence. There are some people who have general talents for everything and particular talents for nothing. Of these people I fight shy. Application and perseverance always tell.

We have two notable illustrations of this fact in Demosthenes and Coleridge. That Coleridge was a "myriad-minded man" all literary men will agree. His genius was evident to one and all. In his early life no one met him without a sense of wonder and admiration. The apostrophe of Charles Lamb respecting him, as Dr. W. J. Dawson has so ably expressed it, is "equally famous and pathetic." "Come back into memory, like as thou wert in the dayspring of thy fancies, with

hope like a fiery column before thee—the dark pillar not yet turned, Samuel Taylor Coleridge—Logician, Metaphysician, Bard!"¹ What he did produce is the pure gold of literature, but he frittered away his time and did practically nothing. Compare Coleridge with Demosthenes. Demosthenes had an ambition to be an orator, but he was troubled with defective speech. Any one can appreciate how hard it must be for a stammerer or a stutterer to excel as a speaker, but Demosthenes applied himself with a will. He studied his calling and practised his art on the sea shore with pebbles in his mouth until he became one of the few experts in expressing the beautiful but intricate language of Greece.

One more glance at this young man Saul, and then we must leave him for the present. As we listen to him we become convinced that he is intensely devout. Saul was the very embodiment of sincerity. We do him serious injustice if we think otherwise. He mourns the fact of his having been a persecutor, but confesses that he did it ignorantly in unbelief. Never was a man inspired by loftier motives than Saul, when he set out to overthrow Christianity. But when the light of God flashed upon his soul, he became aware that his life hitherto had been a huge blunder and trembling with astonishment he cried, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Young people, I do not question your sincerity.

¹ *The Making of Manhood.*

It may be as transparent as the noon-day light, but sincerity is not all. May not your life with all its good intentions be wrong? Have you recognized and acknowledged the Kingship of Christ? Let your life be guided by an intelligent purpose, and henceforth and forever may it be your purpose and mine to live Christ!

CHAPTER II

IGNORING THE CRISIS

Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.—Heb. XII, 16-17.

JACOB and Esau are brought before us, by the sacred historian in a very realistic manner. Taking the two young men as they are depicted to us, they present a very profitable and interesting study. As we look at them our first impression is that they are not akin. One is red and rough and ready; the other is white and smooth and deep. When we are fully convinced that they are brothers and twins at that, we marvel at the striking contrasts to be found in the same family. Doubtless we often have remarked upon the differences in children: difference in disposition, of ambition, and of appearance, in numbers of families we have known.

These two boys have no family resemblance whatever and as they grow to manhood they exhibit different traits of character. Esau was a cunning hunter, while Jacob was a plain man dwelling in tents. Jacob was shrewd, calculating and

crafty; whereas Esau was frank and goodnatured; but withal reckless and impatient of all restraint.

These two brothers come upon the stage as actors in a scene which reveals their character, and decides their destiny. In the first act we see the sturdy but famished hunter returning from the chase, and we impulsively sympathize with him as we see him staggering along and almost falling with exhaustion. In the foreground we see his scheming brother preparing a tempting meal. He has been watching for a favorable opportunity, and now he is determined to have his price before his brother shares his meal. The mess of red lentils looked very savoury, and the smell of it simply took Esau by storm. We are told of the Arab by those who know him well, that his hunger is madness. That madness is now upon Esau. Being a hearty eater at any time and knowing the pleasure of gratifying a good appetite he exclaimed, "Feed me, I pray thee, with that red—that red!" He did not know what to call it: but it looked good to eat, and it would satisfy the cravings of hunger.

And Jacob said, "Sell me this day thy birth-right." The birthright was more than a title. It was an honour which carried with it certain distinct advantages. In the Jewish economy the first-born was signally favoured, he was consecrated to God, he received a double portion of the inheritance, he became the recognised leader or chief of the tribe, and had a right to demand a particular

blessing from his dying father.

By meditation, Jacob had peered into the future; and had a fairly accurate idea of the advantages accruing from the birthright; while Esau had thought little or nothing about it. And without the slightest suspicion that he was nearing a crisis he burst out, "Behold I am at the point to die, and what profit shall my birthright do to me?" No! Esau! thou art far from dying! A dying man is not quite so vehement. Thy words are an outburst of passion rather than a cry of pain! Esau is suffering from a lack of patience. Other men have been as hungry, and tightened their belts. Why didn't he set to work and prepare his own meal? Surely Jacob did not have a monopoly of all the red lentils in the country. Had Esau exercised patience, and behaved like a full grown man, instead of acting the part of a giant baby, he would not have ignored his crisis.

What a tempted man needs is patience, staying power, the ability to hold out. If he can hold out long enough, the demon of darkness will release his grip, and he will emerge from the struggle victorious.

In the second act upon this stage the bargain has been accepted, the birthright has been sold, and Esau is busy satisfying the cravings of hunger. As we watch the two brothers we hardly can refrain from remarking that one lives to eat, and the other eats to live; one has a stomach, and the other has a soul; one is a kind of digesting ma-

chine, the other thinks, and, whether commendable or not, he gets things going his way. It is hardly necessary to say, that as they stand neither of them is a saint. In fact one of them does not wish to be regarded as a saint. He had little use for prayers and pious looks. They might be all very well for his aged father; but as for his slick brother a fine kind of saint he would make.

Although Jacob was no saint he ultimately became one. To begin with he did not give much promise of sainthood; rather he was full of faults, and among others he was guilty of the detestable fault of meanness. Jacob's conduct has been a problem to a great many young men; but whatever view you take of Jacob remember that God did not countenance his wrongdoing. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap," and Jacob was no exception.

On the other hand Esau was frank and free; an openhanded fellow with an honest heart. He was the kind of a young man you like to meet, but when you have been in his company for a while you have his depth. At first he can charm you with his hunting adventures, but you soon tire of hunting stories, and when you begin to talk on any other subject to Esau, he is at sea. All he can wax eloquent about is a good square meal; his last carousal, or his anticipation of the next. You have met those amiable Esaus. They are fine fellows; but if you take them away from their favourite subjects of appetite or sport, they are

dumb. They can tell you nothing about the best authors; for they do not read those books which are worth while and which are the best thoughts of the noblest brains that ever throbbed. They do not care for music; for they do not sing the songs that have led battalions on to victory. They are strangers to the divine power of sacred song. As for art they may gaze upon it, but they cannot see its inner beauty. They have the eyes of a hawk but the vision of an owl. How keen-sighted they are! By a kind of instinct they can discern a beast in the forest, or a ball upon the field, but they are blind to the really beautiful in art, in nature and in history.

A would-be critic said to Turner, "I never see such sunsets as you paint."

The artist replied saying, "Don't you wish you could?"

As for the sacred name of religion, these Esaus have no use for it; they are emphatically unspiritual. They can see no need for ministers and churches and Sundays and endless expense. We have Esaus around us who glory in their physical strength, as though the body were everything, but as for their souls they never seem to give them a passing thought! They are strong and swift and clever. They win our admiration as athletes, and, indeed, they are splendid animals; but in moral calibre and spiritual force they are as children who have not yet begun to walk or talk. These Esaus with their splendid physique are full

of promise, but unless the body hands the reins of moral government to the soul, they will plunge forward into madness and ruin.

Esau sells his birthright, eats his meal, and goes out as though nothing had happened, but he has not gone for good, he will return again, and when he returns he will be brought face to face with his folly.

In the third act an old man sits upon the stage. He is almost blind. Isaac imagines he is about to go the way of all flesh, and before he makes his exit from the stage he intends to bless his first-born. Esau is called and given his instructions. "Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die." Esau goes on his errand, and presently in comes Jacob dressed as Esau, and bringing with him savoury meat. Isaac cries, "Who art thou my son?"

Jacob tells the first of his three lies, and steals the blessing. He retires, and has just made good his retreat, when in comes Esau saying, "Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me."

Isaac trembled, and said, "Who? Where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? Yea, and he shall be blessed."

"And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father!"

We are profoundly moved by this exceeding great and bitter cry. It is always an affecting sight to see a man in tears; but to hear a strong man crying out in an agony of anguish is simply heartrending. We feel the tragedy of his position as we take our stand by the side of poor heart-broken Esau. The tragedy is this: his tears are of no avail, the blessing has been pronounced upon the head of another, and what is done cannot be undone. Our hearts vibrate with genuine sympathy for Esau as the consequences of his folly break upon him like a bolt from the blue. We instinctively take sides with him as he vows vengeance on his brother, and as for the part played by his mother we regard such treachery as beneath contempt. But we must exercise a care.

There is a law in the moral realm which we break at our peril; and we are all too eager to look for sympathy and excuse ourselves when the consequences of our wilfulness are brought home to us.

As for Jacob, he also sinned and that most grievously. He played the detestable part of a sneak and a coward. The blessing went with the birthright and had Jacob been a truer man he would have chosen a more honourable means of obtaining it.

The present seems an opportune time for venting our wrath upon all the crafty and cowardly conspirators that ever have lived; upon all the scheming, self-seeking Jacobs at work in modern times, but we must refrain.

Jacob's meanness is no excuse for Esau's folly. Esau is a type of that vaunting individual who gaily intimates that he is going to sow his wild oats. The would-be Esau had better reflect upon his course. There is seed-time and harvest in the moral world, and harvest time comes with unerring certainty. Esau's behaviour over a mess of pottage was anything but commendable. His impatient utterance then was a seed sown which grew into an exceeding great and bitter cry. "Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall the birthright do to me?" His words reveal a lack of reverence. If he had thought seriously what the birthright meant to him he would have been more reluctant in parting with it. His demeanour suggests that he had thought little or nothing about it. He did not appreciate the fact that his father was a patriarch and that, in the natural order of things he would succeed his father, and have the unspeakable privilege of walking and talking with God.

A lack of reverence is a serious defect in a young man's character. But you ask, "What did Esau know about reverence?" He was not a heathen or we might excuse him. It is to be feared that many poor heathen groping in pagan

darkness have reflected more upon the majesty and mystery of human life than many of our young people living in Christian homes. They fail to see any advantage in having a godly father and a praying mother. Esau-like they are despising their birthright. Esau had opportunities for healthy reflection. Though modest, his father was a distinguished man, a man honoured of God and esteemed by his fellows, but Esau cared for none of these things. Life to him was a hunting ground, and as far as we can gather from the sacred records, he had no more reverence for God and the world than had the animals he stalked in the chase. Besides, even though he was not a god-fearing youth he might have exhibited a degree of self-reverence which makes a man feel the dignity of human life, and to, at least, ask himself the questions, "Whence?" and "Whither?"

Is not lack of reverence one of the outstanding defects in the life of the modern youth? Reverence is an intuition of the soul. It suggests modesty in the presence of mystery. Reverence should be more in evidence in the home, in the church, and in the world. Young people! Recognize the dignity of human nature, and the uniqueness of your own individuality. Consider your relationship to God and ponder the words of the Psalmist concerning man, "Thou hast made him but little lower than God, and crownest him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands" (R. V.). A "little

lower than God!"

What manner of persons ought we to be? As our responsibilities dawn upon us we will stand in awe, like Moses before the burning bush, or like Jacob we will cry, "Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not." Reverence is an essential feature in the character of all who appreciate their birthright. Had Esau been as eager to feed his mind as he was to gratify his appetite, he would have been a king among men.

It is one of the appalling aspects of our modern life that so many who might have graced prominent positions are feasting their lower nature and leaving their souls to starve. "Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall my birthright do to me?" Esau's outburst not only suggests a lack of reverence, but reveals a lack of self-control. He could not hold himself in check until he had decided whether he was acting wisely or foolishly in agreeing to such terms as Jacob made. His lower nature had possession of the reins. He had yielded to its voice so often that now it would brook no refusal. It cried out for a mess of potage, and regardless of the price it must have it.

At first the lower nature makes very modest demands, but as these demands are gratified it assumes alarming proportions, and eventually drags the higher nature along as a captive in chains. Beware of the power of appetite! To lose your self-control puts you very much in the position of a man on a run-away horse. You do not know

where the brute will carry you.

Esau's impatient outburst also reveals his profanity. It is a terrible indictment to label a man profane. In the Bible Esau is referred to as that "profane person." The more we study his act and attitude the more are we convinced that this indictment, although severe, is just. "Profane." The word of God very clearly demonstrates that we cannot tamper with our religious privileges. We trifle with them at our peril. A reckless disregard for a high and holy calling which carries with it an enduring inheritance reaps its own harvest. A despised birthright culminates in an exceeding great and bitter cry. Irreverence leads to profanity, and a lack of self-control prepares the way to fornication.

Esau's eyes were eventually opened to the consequences of his folly and he tried to repent: to undo the past, but he was too late. Tears—not even tears of repentance—could give him back the birthright he had despised. How full of warning is Esau's example to us! "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

What a volume of suggestion there is in that word, "afterward!" There is an "afterward" in every life. If a man has lived for God there is

an afterward of abiding peace, "in the evening it shall be light." If a man has "sown the wind, he shall reap the whirlwind." His afterward shall be one of sorrow and remorse.

What have we done with our birthright? We have a birthright before which the birthright of Esau pales into insignificance. His birthright carried with it great privileges, but ours makes us "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." If it was a sin for Esau to despise his birthright, "how shall me escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

Esau was too late for the blessing which went with the birthright but when he was convinced of the consequences of his youthful folly he pleaded with commendable tenacity before his father, and he did not plead in vain. As we listen to his heart-broken accents, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" we are moved with compassion. Esau is beginning to appreciate the value of spiritual things. As he continues to plead, "Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?" we are reminded of a crisis of our own when we said, "I will arise and go to my Father." Esau's final plea prevailed. "Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father!"

"And Esau lifted up his voice and wept." Moved by the importunate cries and tears of his son, Isaac said unto him, "Behold thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt

thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck." This lesser blessing was the reward of Esau's persevering prayer even at the eleventh hour.

The past is beyond recall, but the present and the future are yours. Christ came "to seek and to save that which was lost." He is seeking for you and says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

CHAPTER III

CAN CHRIST DO ANYTHING FOR THE MORALLY UPRIGHT?

Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.—Acts VIII, 35.

THE divinity of Christianity is seen in its transforming effect upon all types of character. During its onward march from the day on which its Founder hung on Calvary's hill to the present it has given ample proof of its adaptability to meet the requirements and supply the needs of every age and clime. In each succeeding generation, it has been the power of God unto salvation to every man, woman, and child, who has believed with the heart unto righteousness. The reclaiming and renewing of moral and physical wrecks is often referred to as the peculiar glory of our holy religion. This is a buoyant truth which shines as a star of hope to the man standing on the brink of despair. This truth we reiterate with sacred joy: Christ is able to save to the uttermost "all that come unto God by Him."

When the members of the Jewish sanhedrim, as they were straining for evidence to convict Peter and John, beheld the lame man healed they

could say nothing against it. They were too prejudiced to say anything in its favour, but so evident was the fact of restoration that try as they might, they could say nothing against it. Jesus heals the lame man. This is one of the unanswerable arguments which support His claim to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. When men like St. Augustine, John Bunyan, and Jerry McAuley give an unvarnished statement of their vices and then proceed to relate how they were plucked as brands from the burning, we marvel. And when we reflect upon their transformed lives, radiant with the beauty of holiness, and their strenuous labours as ambassadors of Christ, we are constrained to magnify God for His grace in them. Let this truth be universally proclaimed: there is hope and pardon, life and immortality for the hardened, blackened transgressor. Yes, even for the man who has lost faith in himself and his fellows; there is mercy and salvation for him if he will seek the Lord in sincerity and in truth.

But is this the only type of character with which Christ is able do deal effectively? By no means. He welcomes all sorts and conditions of men, and whether their diseases are appalling to themselves or not taken very seriously, He diagnoses every case, reveals to each his true condition, and in His mercy heals them all. "Whosoever will, may come, and partake of the water of life freely."

In this address it is my intention, in so far as I am able, to show what Christ can do for those who

are morally upright. There are large numbers, especially of young people, who have been reared in Christian homes, who have been shielded by Christian influences, and who regularly attend public worship. Many of these pride themselves upon their clean lives, and such are to be commended for their uprightness. But what is the Lord Christ able to do for them? Will He say to such, "Your training has been so satisfactory and your lives so free from open transgression that you may be saved by proxy"? No! He will not say that; although He fully appreciates all the good there is in every life.

Good deeds, not even engaging in church work, will save us. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." The Ethiopian eunuch is a type of those who are morally upright, and we will see what Christ did for him. Let us make a brief study of his character. "Behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias, the prophet." This eunuch was a remarkable man. There are several things in his favour, and I trust we shall benefit by his example. He was a man of culture. This is evident from the statement that he was a man of great authority, also from the position which he occupied as treasurer for Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. There is considerable difference between a man of

culture and an ignoramus. We may infer reasonably that this eunuch had improved his opportunities for getting knowledge and experience. There is no royal road to success, and when we read that he was "a man of great authority" we are reminded of days, and months, and probably years of diligent study by way of preparation for his life work.

As a rule ignorant people are not given positions of responsibility. Whatever methods of promotion may have obtained in the past there is no uncertainty about the methods in vogue to-day. This is preëminently an age of scientific knowledge. It is brains and not patronage that counts. It is what a man is, and not what his rich uncle or his father is, that determines his position in the realm of affairs. By our own merits we stand or fall. If we would live effectively, we must specialize. Henry Ward Beecher thrilled the students of Yale University when he gave utterance to words well worthy of our thought. He said, "Know something about everything, but know everything about something." In any sphere it is by no means satisfactory to have just enough practical knowledge to retain a certain position: the demand which is becoming more and more insistent is that we become experts in our respective callings. We are not merely supposed to occupy certain positions, but to grace them with efficiency and success. It will hardly be necessary for me to enlarge upon the advantages of youthful diligence,

and faithful application. The day will come when the diligent youth will be rewarded with a position of trust and honour. It is easy to talk of the eminence of men like the late W. E. Gladstone, but did they slip into their positions by accident? Look across the years! See the youth Gladstone carefully utilizing half hours in study that his school mates were spending in play.

The Ethiopian eunuch was a trusted servant. He was at home in the realm of finance, and he graced his position by efficiency and honour. Again, He was a religious man. We are apt, with a meaning glance, to speak of a man as being of a religious turn of mind. But any man who passes religion by, as a subject not worthy of his notice, is either a superficial observer of the cardinal facts of human life, or the owner of a very shallow mind. A man's religious attitude is a determining factor in his career. This eunuch did not regard religion as a mere matter of sentiment, but as a vital reality. He was true to the light he had, and any man who is true to the light he has will ultimately be led to the true light. To begin with, he was a heathen, but paganism had nothing in it with which to satisfy the spiritual requirements of his nature, so he renounced paganism, and embraced Judaism. Some critics are of the opinion that the Jewish religion was introduced into Ethiopia by the Queen of Sheba, on her return from visiting Solomon. This is hardly probable, although it is patent that the eunuch was well versed

in the faith he had embraced. He believed it to be the truth, and he was consistent in performing the duties his new faith required of him. Of his sincerity we are assured by the fact of his pilgrimage to Jerusalem to attend the feast. Although he was high in the social scale, and one of the leading statesmen of his country, he did not neglect his religious obligations. Had he been so disposed, he might have discovered a few excuses fully as reasonable as are generally given to justify absence from public worship, but he was too good a man for that. As a rule those people who have most to do along domestic, agricultural, and commercial lines have most time to attend to their moral and spiritual interests. This eunuch's conduct enables us to see that he was a man of sincere devotion.

He was the proud possessor of a copy of *The Law and the Prophets*, and consequently an ardent Bible student. In modern life books multiply so quickly that we fail to appreciate their worth. Centuries ago Bibles were few and expensive; and where one was to be found, chained to a stand in a church, and a reader was available, there were many eager listeners to the truth. That the eunuch had in his possession a copy of the Hebrew scriptures intimates that he was a man of considerable wealth. Note carefully where his Bible was. He did not have it put away at the back of his chariot. In these days it seems as though many Bibles were too precious for every day use, judging by the places in which they are to be found,

provided one can be found, when the preacher makes a pastoral call. Let us see to it that we never become too busy to read a portion of the word of God every day. A well-thumbed Bible is a fair indication of a prosperous soul. This man was not ahead of us in possessing a Bible, for in the majority of homes there are two or three, but he certainly appears to advantage when we remember that the minister caught him in the act of reading it. He did not pick it up and open it at random when he saw Philip coming, for he was engaged in a very thoughtful study of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and if ever a man was near the Kingdom it was he. The supreme moment in his history was fast approaching.

In estimating the character and conduct of this eunuch, you will readily agree that he compares favourably with the morally upright persons I described at the beginning of this address. It is sometimes a hard proposition to convince these good people of their need of Christ. A favourite plea of theirs is, "What better can I do?" or "What better can I be?" The defect of their position is that stress is laid on good works, instead of saving faith. It is imperative that we avoid confusion in this matter. It is not a question of being made better: it is a question of being remade. Christ offers a new heart and a new spirit to morally good people, as He does to all men, and the need is imperative in every case. "Ye must be born again."

This eunuch was a good man in every respect. He was a splendid business man, and he was intensely religious, yet he was not a Christian. Brethren! let us rest satisfied with nothing short of a whole-hearted surrender of ourselves, just as we are, to Jesus Christ. Any man who seeks for the truth as this man did will most assuredly find it. Man's extremity is God's opportunity.

Shall we now consider the change he experienced? There is something very sad in the experience of this devout worshipper, and the sadness is intensified when we consider that he is not alone. He had come on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the express purpose of quenching his thirst at the well of truth. He had studied Judaism until he came to respect and embrace its teaching; but withal, the demands of his nature were not satisfied, and he took this long journey to appease the heart hunger which all men have felt. The teaching of the Hebrew scriptures appealed to him so strongly that he wondered if there were anything more in them. He had been to Jerusalem, had joined in the Temple services, and was returning dissatisfied. He had an idea that the last word had not been spoken concerning those scriptures. And in his perplexity he took up the book, and began to read aloud, pondering every word, "He was wounded for our transgressions." There was something very precious and consoling in that chapter, also something deeply mysterious and tragic in the thought of the innocent being

punished for the guilty. He could not understand it. However, he continued to read, "He is led as a lamb to the slaughter."

Just then, he was accosted by the voice of a stranger, who in a friendly manner asked him if he knew what he was reading. He replied, "How can I except some man should guide me?" He invited Philip to come up and sit with him. The preacher was glad to be of service. When it comes to questions of this nature never hesitate to ask your minister, for we are your servants for Christ's sake. The eunuch said to Philip, "I pray thee of whom speaketh the prophet this?" Philip replied to the eunuch's question by preaching unto him Jesus. He related how the prophets had spoken of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, told of the mighty promises, told how the Jews had been expecting the Messiah. As these two men sat and talked, the growing wonder in the eyes of the one lent eloquence to the tongue of the other. And as Philip was enlarging upon the glory of Messiah's kingdom the eunuch grasped his arm, and asked, "Has He come?" O the pathos! the yearning behind those words, "Has He come?" In every age and in every country men have been looking and longing for some word of God; and you speak of the Messiah, but tell me this, "Has He come?" It was the unspeakable privilege of Philip to break the news to this seeking soul, that He of whom the prophets had spoken had come.

Can you imagine the thrill of heavenly delight which quivered through the eunuch's frame? I tell you of a truth, that preacher and his auditor were being watched by the angels. O stupendous gospel! He has come! He, who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person. Hallelujah! He has come!

The enchanted listener then urged Philip to describe the Messiah. Can you conceive a sublimer task? Philip, to thee is given an opportunity an archangel might well be proud to embrace, to describe Jesus. We can sympathise with him in his dilemma for he is conscious of attempting an impossible task.

Hear him as he cries, Where shall I begin? Shall I describe His face? His face baffles description, but it beamed with divine compassion on the erring ones, it frowned upon the hypocrite and the oppressor. It was sought and worshipped by the children; it was so arresting in its expression, that sinners, haunted by its strength and beauty, forsook their sins and followed Jesus.

Shall I describe His hands? Those hands with which He laboured to support His widowed mother, those hands with which He touched blind eyes and restored sight, those hands with which He touched the bier and gave a young man back to his mother, those hands with which He touched the poor leper as He said, "I will, be thou clean." Shall I describe His feet? Those feet which trod on errands of mercy from the manger to the

cross. Jesus, my Lord, was betrayed; He was mocked and scourged. Base men struck Him in the face; and those hands and feet were pierced with spikes, and nailed to the cross. He was crowned with thorns and suspended to die, for sins not His own. Philip told of His death and burial, of how He rose again, and ascended to glory.

The trembling eunuch gasped, "Is salvation of the Jews?"

Philip hastened to inform him that the Christian program embraced the world. There was salvation for all, for Jews and Ethiopians. Having the privilege of one for an audience, he preached a personal Saviour. Turning and facing the eunuch, Philip said, "Christ died for you. Do you believe it?"

The eunuch replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God." His response to the gospel message was immediate and his confession left nothing to be desired. "And seeing water the eunuch cried, 'What doth hinder me to be baptized?'" The chariot was brought to a standstill, and he was baptized.

Have you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ? Then what is your next step? The probability is that you already have been baptized. Were you not brought to the font by believing and praying parents? They were faithful in teaching you the good and right way, and it may be they have passed from their place in the church visible, which as yet you have never joined. Why tarry? What

doth hinder you to become a member of the body of Christ? Your life may be flawless, so was the eunuch's. But neither morality nor religion will save you. You need Christ, and Christ needs you. Without further delay identify yourself with His cause, and by your confession, your character, and conduct preach Jesus to others.

Just a parting glance at these two men as they bid each other good-bye. After a most affectionate farewell they separate to meet no more until they meet in heaven, but the Christian eunuch goes on his way rejoicing. No more heart-hunger! No more anxiety! He need go no more on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. With Peter he can say, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." "He went on his way rejoicing." O Christ! how many Thou hast sent on their way rejoicing! Think you, this eunuch kept his religion a secret? No! He told the story o'er and o'er. Whenever he got an opportunity he preached Jesus. "Go thou and do likewise."

CHAPTER IV

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN!

I have played the fool.—I Sam. XXVI, 21.

THIS is a remarkable expression, especially when we consider it as a man's verdict regarding himself. As a rule man blames the other fellow for his folly and wherever circumstances will permit he endeavours to justify himself. Here is a man who has reached a crisis. He has made all the excuses available to shield himself and now acknowledges the part he has played. It is only fair to state that Saul was not always a fool. Billy Bray, the quaint Cornish preacher, said we had to become fools for Christ's sake and suggested some of us did not have much to learn in that direction as we were fairly big fools to begin with, but Saul was not one of these.

Before you condemn any man take a comprehensive survey of his life. Give him credit for all his good qualities, and then if he fails after giving promise of worthy achievement, it is a fearful reminder that the best of us have nothing to boast about, that we are only secure as we are kept by the power of God! In many respects

Saul was a model young man. He was a type of the young man who takes everybody by storm. We are kindly disposed to the young and the fair at any time, but we are simply captivated when youth is as good as it is handsome. We are favoured with a description of Saul's personal appearance in the second verse of the ninth chapter of the first book of Samuel. "Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, a mighty man of power. And he had a son whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders upward he was higher than any of the people." Saul had a splendid physique. He was tall.

It is the ambition of every healthy youth to be big, and Saul was one of nature's gentlemen. I suppose it is an advantage to be tall. Some of us, I have no doubt, once thought ourselves a good deal bigger than we are. We were somewhat consoled when we heard that there was many a big good-for-nothing. But a big good-for-nothing will not excuse a little good-for-nothing and of the two evils which would you choose? It is quite natural to want to be fully as big, if not a little bigger than the average. God has put a divine aspiration in our hearts and the desire to be big springs from a longing to do a big work. God hath set eternity in the hearts of the sons of men and when we are true to the highest we cannot be satisfied with anything really small and superficial.

But we must not run away with the idea that tallness is always measured by inches. One day Napoleon was reaching for a book which proved to be beyond his reach. An officer stepped up, reached the book and handed it to the Emperor, with the remark that sometimes it was a good thing to be tall. The Emperor indicated how stature was to be measured when he curtly replied "Longer not taller." Watts says:

"Were I so tall to reach the pole,
Or grasp the ocean in a span,
Man must be measured by his soul
The mind's the standard of the man."

Size counts, no doubt, but mere bigness is not all, and in the final issue it is not what you can reach but what you can grasp. It is a good thing to be a physical giant, but a moral and spiritual giant is infinitely higher both in the sight of God and man.

Saul was not merely tall in stature, he was also good-looking. He was decidedly attractive. He was the "beauty" or "ornament" of Israel, "a choice young man and a goodly, there was none goodlier than he." We all want to be good-looking, and if we are not blessed with a striking personal appearance, let us at least look as well as we can. How to appear to the best advantage seems to be the problem of some people's existence. We have our professional beautifiers who guar-

antee to make us look several years younger than we really are, and if we are willing to submit to their treatment they can give us any complexion we may prefer. Appearance may have its merits, but a true man is not built for show. "Man looketh at the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart." Beauty of character is to be preferred to beauty of feature and the beauty of holiness to the beauty of figure. If we were half so much concerned about our souls, as we are about the adornment of our bodies, we would cultivate a beauty that would not forsake us in our gray hairs.

Saul was not only tall and attractive, he was obedient. It was his prompt obedience to his father's command that sent him on a trifling errand, but which in reality led him to the throne of Israel. Young men! the most trifling duties in life will decide the success or failure of your career. It is an old-fashioned ethic which demands obedience to parents, but no wise man will say that it is out of date. Unless you learn the grace of obedience in your own home, there is trouble which may amount to disaster ahead of you.

Besides being obedient, Saul was generous. When his servant suggested that in the city there was a man of God who could tell them the whereabouts of the asses which had strayed, and that they had better go to him, Saul hesitated, saying, "What shall we bring to the man? for the bread is spent in over vessels, and there is not a present

to bring to the man of God: what have we?" And it was only when his servant assured him that there was the fourth part of a shekel of silver left, that Saul consented to go.

A generous youth always appeals to us, and as a rule he has many friends. I was not at all surprised when I read of Henry Ward Beecher's saying to the students of Yale University that a mean man never made a successful minister, and his saying may be applied to every honourable calling in life. Generosity is a pleasing feature in a young man's character, but unless it is directed and controlled by the grace of God, it may lead to extravagance and indulgence.

Finally, Saul was modest. This is a virtue few of us suffer from to any great extent. When Samuel the prophet said to Saul, "And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee and on all thy father's house?"

Saul answered and said, "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore then speakest thou so to me?" Humility and reverence are graces we should strive to cultivate. The instructor does not like the pupil who will not be told. A merchant has very little use for the apprentice who thinks he knows the business better in a week than he does himself. Nobody has much use for the man who seeks to impress upon all and sundry, that he knows it all. We are all learners, and al-

though we may think that our heads are crammed full of knowledge, our heads are not so very big after all. One of the first signs of knowledge is a consciousness of our own ignorance. Modesty becomes us all, and so does reverence. Look at Saul as he reverently kneels before the prophet while that august person pours the anointing oil upon his head and consecrates him king. It is a beautiful sight, and as we gaze upon it do we not feel that we owe reverence to those who are endeavouring to prepare us for our kingdom? We owe a debt of gratitude to the prophets who have assisted in anointing us for our life's work, to our parents, to our teachers, and to our masters. Therefore do not try to find fault with them. Recognize and appreciate their good qualities, their regard for you, their patience with you, and their oftentimes thankless task.

Now that we have got better acquainted with Saul we begin to entertain high hopes for his future. There he stands! a big, handsome generous-hearted fellow, an obedient son, a worthy citizen, and crowned with the majesty of modesty. There he stands! the young man upon whom the Divine choice has fallen, in whom so many hopes are centred, and who is to enjoy the unspeakable privilege of leading the soldiers of God on to victory. Yes, there he stands, as many young men stand to-day, ready to begin to sow upon the field of time, while sympathetic onlookers, some with anxious hearts, are wondering what the harvest will

be. If ever any one made a good start Saul did. He was admirably adapted to his work, and he made a most promising beginning. His first battle was prophetic of a triumphant reign. "Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabesh Gilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee. And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, 'On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel.' And the elders of Jabesh said unto him, 'Give us seven days' respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then, if there be no man to save us, we will come out to thee.'" These messengers were despatched; they informed the people, and the people lifted up their voices and wept. "And, behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field; and said, 'What aileth the people that they weep?' And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh. And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly. And he took the yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers saying, 'Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen.' And the fear of the Lord fell on the people, and they came out as with one consent."

How inspiring to read of Saul's preparations

for his first encounter with the enemy! He acted so promptly and so gloriously that he proved himself a king, both by nature and by grace. Without the slightest hesitation he showed that he was master of the occasion; and unconsciously he made such a display of the essential elements of leadership that the Israelites were swept into the ranks as one man. And with such a leader in such a cause no wonder he faced, and fought, and utterly routed the foe. So far Saul has been all that we could reasonably desire. He has displayed his genius as a citizen, as a soldier, and as a king. We are somewhat bewildered to think that a career so full of promise should eventually close in such a tragic manner.

But when we look into his history a little more closely we see where he made his first mistake. In the celebration of this victory over the Ammonites, "Saul and the men of Israel rejoiced greatly." Here we have the first intimation of his spiritual pride. From that day forth Saul was bigger in his own eyes, and perhaps he never read the words, "Pride goeth before a fall."

Young men, amid your most brilliant achievements remember to whom you are indebted for your gifts, and strive earnestly to cultivate the spirit of gratitude and meekness. "Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what has thou that thou did'st not receive?" When success is crowning your efforts it is a time to rejoice with trembling. Saul had been faithfully warned by

the prophet that if he did wickedly, he would be consumed, and warned we all have been.

What was the first step taken by Saul on the downgrade? Impatience. A garrison of Philistines had advanced as far as Geba. Jonathan smote them, and to avenge themselves the Philistines came against Israel in full force, and were as the sand upon the sea shore for multitude. Samuel instructed Saul to wait for seven days, when he would come and offer sacrifice. On this occasion Saul revealed his real character: self-will, impatience, and disobedience. He waited until the morning of the seventh day, and seeing no sign of the prophet, took on himself the awful responsibility of offering the sacrifice. He had just made an end of offering when Samuel arrived, saying, "What hast thou done?" Saul endeavoured to justify himself but the prophet replied, "Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which He commanded thee: for now would He have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue." Had Saul waited another hour or two he would have saved his kingdom to his sons in their successive generations.

Alas! how much we lose by our impatience. What other sin is so rampant to-day? Impatience is one of the outstanding sins of our time? Everybody is in a hurry, we have to rush through with everything we undertake to do, we are getting impatient of abiding God's time, and so, like Saul,

we sacrifice principle for expediency, and risk our souls for gain. Impatience is the secret of gambling. Men are too impatient to acquire gain by legitimate methods, and so seek quick returns on the wheel of chance. Many a young man plays his cards well for a while, according to his own notion, but no matter how well he plays, sooner or later, he will acknowledge, as those unnatural fires consume his manhood, that he has played the fool.

Impatience is the secret of the liquor traffic. Think you that the liquor dealer is in the business because he is actuated by philanthropic motives? An eye-witness related to me the following incident. A certain man was drinking one evening in a bar-room. It was getting late when a woman entered, and going up to the man she asked him for some money to buy food for their starving children. Her husband turned around and for answer, deliberately struck his wife in the face, knocking her senseless to the floor. The hotel proprietor came rushing in, and seeing the woman, the wife of that husband and father, who had been transformed into a demon through drink, that mother of starving children in a land boasting of civilization and liberty, that poor half-starved creature lying in that condition on the floor, and looking at the men present who were patronizing the bar, he said, "This is awful boys, but there's money in it."

Young man, if there is money in it for the pro-

priector what is there in it for you? Indulgence, pauperism, and possibly the gallows, or a drunkard's grave. Can it be that the prophecy is being fulfilled in your case which reads, "The fool and his money are soon parted?"

If we yield to the temptation to become impatient of honesty and integrity in seeking a livelihood, and pay too big a price for success, in the midst of our questionable gains, we will hear a voice saying, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."

God gave Saul another splendid opportunity of redeeming his character, but in this he failed through disobedience. The command was, go and utterly destroy the Amalekites. Saul went in obedience to this command, and destroyed the Amalekites with the exception of the king and the best of the sheep and oxen. "And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, 'Blessed be thou of the Lord; I have performed the commandment of the Lord.' And Samuel said, 'What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?' " Again Saul sought to excuse himself and to blame the people for the spoil. The prophet was not to be silenced by Saul's excuses. In solemn tones he replied, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He also hath rejected thee from being king." When Saul heard the worst he acknowledged the cause of his failure, and said, "I have

sinned: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice."

Like many to-day, Saul feared the people more than he feared God. Through disobedience he won a flock of sheep and a herd of cattle, but at what a price! In the moral realm, every man pays the price. The price Saul paid was his kingdom, and in that awful transaction he lost his God. Here we have a concrete illustration of sin in its working. Progress is made along "a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." At the point of departure from the path of righteousness, we discern the unmistakable features of pride, this leads to impatience, impatience of piety, impatience of honesty, impatience of conscientious scruples, and this prepares the way for disobedience to God and every accepted standard of right. The man who has been playing with evil is like Saul who "wist not that the Spirit of the Lord had departed from him."

Having sinned away his day of grace, Saul, who had been distinguished for his generous courage, stands subdued before the uncircumcised Philistine, Goliath of Gath. Daily this haughty heretic comes forth to defy the armies of the living God. What a sorry part is now being played by a man who had once been a hero! A man who had once faced a crisis in a terrible might, and without waiting to ask the reason why, had hewed his oxen to pieces, sent portions through-

out Israel, had raised his army as if by magic, had struck terror into the hearts of the Ammonites, and now, to be brow-beaten and intimidated by a single Philistine must be mortifying in the extreme. It would be a farce were it not the story of a great moral tragedy. Is there none to be found in the ranks of the regulars to take away this reproach? No! not one. The uncertain demeanor of the handsome giant of Israel has had a deadly effect upon every man on the field.

To save the day, God sends forth a young man after His own heart. The youngest son of Jesse, the ruddy shepherd youth who has been sent with supplies to the ranks, and who has not yet learned to doubt the might of God, goes against the Philistine, and smites him dead with a stone from his sling. For this deliverance David is praised by the maidens of Israel who celebrate the victory by singing, "Saul hath slain his thousands and David his ten thousands." This popular recognition of David's achievement enrages the jealous Saul, and he secretly determines to take David's life, and thus cheat Providence by disposing of all possible rivals. An evil spirit came upon Saul and at times he was insane. He attempts to take David's life, but David escapes; and can you imagine anything quite so tragic as the insane Saul on a fool's errand, seeking to slay the Lord's anointed?

Many are on the same errand to-day. "Fret not thyself because of evil doers." Some of us fret a great deal and are daily kept in bondage.

Even David said, "One of these days I shall fall by the hand of Saul." No, David! thou art reserved for something great! and you poor annoyed soul, if it hath pleased God to reveal His son in you, He has a work for you to do; and by fretting yourself because of evil doers, you may be unfitting yourself for your divinely appointed task.

It was on one of these escapades against the innocent and unoffending David that the pursued came upon the pursuer. David caught Saul and his followers asleep and his servant urged him to smite, but David said, "The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed: but, take now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go." David withdrew and waited; and when Saul and his soldiers came forth he cried to Abner and Saul knew his voice. David lifting up the king's spear asked what evil he had done. And Saul smitten with a sense of shame cried, "I have sinned: return, my son David; for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly."

Saul, thou art near to a more enduring kingdom than the one thou hast lost! Thou hast never been nearer the fulfilment of the majestic promise of thy youth than thou art now! How near to repentance unto life, and yet how far!

We have to pass over much that is interesting. We cannot spend his last night with him. But

where will you find a sadder story of a soul that has made shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience than that which relates how poor, godless, wretched Saul, mad with despair, flung himself upon his bloody sword, and died the death of a suicide? Poor Saul! He played the fool in his life, and crowned his folly by dying as the fool dieth. As a warning to others write upon his tombstone, "I have played the fool."

Usually a man plays the fool a long time before he knows it. In fact, he thinks he is smart and getting ahead of everybody, he carries himself with a self-satisfied air, when, all unknown to nobody but himself, he is playing the fool. A man plays the fool a long time before he will acknowledge it. His usual plea is, "I see no harm in it, the company is congenial, and I am no fool." Eventually with all his fine parts, in the face of murdered opportunities and a wasted frame he cries, "I have played the fool."

The once mighty and majestic Saul has fallen, and mourn for him as we may, we cannot bring him back to play his part again. We pass this way but once. What's done cannot be undone. The one redeeming feature in this dark picture is that the people of Jabesh-Gilead remembered Saul as they knew him, the victorious monarch. They rescued his body from the Philistines and buried him with every token of reverence and respect. What a different career Saul's might have been. O that he had been true! But all our

wishes avail nothing. There is one wish we have, however, we wish he had not been such a fool as to think he could cheat God. What part are you playing?

CHAPTER V

A PRESENT CRISIS

*What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?—
Matt. XXVII, 22.*

THE scene to which we are introduced by the words of our text did not have much more than a local significance when it was enacted, but time has proved it to be one of the most significant dramas ever played upon the stage of history. Jesus stands in the open court of the governor's palace in the presence of Pilate and His accusers. He has been tried by His fellow countrymen, and in their judgment found worthy of death. The charges brought against Him had been of too flimsy a nature, even to satisfy a bigoted Jewish tribunal. False witnesses had been engaged to swear away His life, but they utterly failed in their undertaking. After hearing several witnesses the high priest said unto Him, “ ‘I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.’ ”

“Jesus saith unto him, ‘Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.’ ”

"Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, 'He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard this blasphemy. What think ye?'

"They answered and said, 'He is guilty of death.' "

After suffering shameful treatment at the hands of these chosen people in which they spit in His face and smite Him with their hands saying, "Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?" He was brought into the presence of Pilate to have their decision confirmed. There He stands before Pilate awaiting his judgment! As we gaze upon the scene we cannot help feeling it is a solemn moment for Christ. It is an anxious time when a man stands in a court of law awaiting the decision of the judge respecting a minor offence, but what must it be to the man just prior to the pronouncement of the sentence when life and death are hanging in the balance? There was nothing very exceptional in the circumstances of this trial. Those interested, as on similar occasions, sought to make the most of their side of the situation. Often before, Pilate had heard their arguments, had pronounced judgment, and dismissed these troublesome Jews without a serious thought. To show his utter disregard for what the Jews termed holy ground he once issued orders for the execution of certain disturbers of the peace whose blood he mingled with their sacrifices without a qualm of conscience.

But there is no gainsaying the fact that he is ill at ease to-day. What accounts for this change in Pilate as he sits in circumstances so familiar? Merely the difference of a few details. The first of these is the demeanor of the prisoner. This prisoner is in a class by Himself. Other prisoners acted so differently. Invariably they sought to justify themselves, while this prisoner is calm and resigned. There is such a look of gentleness in His features; and He is so dignified in His bearing as to make Pilate feel uncomfortable. This was a new feeling for Pilate. Yesterday he was a big man: the man of the hour; a man in authority; the Roman procurator; a dread force to be reckoned with—one whose words made men tremble, but to-day he feels weak and uncertain in the presence of this poor, despised, lonely man. Never before had he seen such a prisoner as this. He had often seen prisoners show their teeth, and vow vengeance on their tormentors, but this prisoner is so different.

Pilate thinks, and the more he thinks the more he hesitates. Presently a happy thought strikes him. It was customary at the feast to release a prisoner whom the people desired. In prison lay a notable outlaw who had been guilty of murder. Here was Pilate's opportunity to get out of a difficult situation; and believing they would choose Christ he cried, "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus, which is called Christ?" At this juncture he received a message

from his wife saying, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him." A dream! What did he care for a dream? At any other time he would have laughed at a dream and ignored it, but to-day he cannot act like himself at all. Try as he will he cannot suppress the tumult raging within. What are these misgivings and these warnings? And what do they signify? For I am not naturally superstitious: and with these thoughts in his mind he calls again to the people, "Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?" And to his dismay they choose Barabbas. Then in reply to their choice he cries, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" And the people persuaded by the priests answer, "Crucify Him."

This request startled the already perplexed and hesitating Pilate. This was the first time the Jews had requested that one of their countrymen should be degraded by such a shameful death. Pilate took the prisoner behind, and in a short time returned, saying, "I find no fault in Him." This led the mob which was reaching the height of its frenzy to yell in louder strains, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him." And as a final reason they cried, "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." Pilate hearing this charge was the more afraid. Thinking that he might reach a satisfactory conclusion of this event which is deep-

ening into tragedy he takes his prisoner again into the judgment hall. Here, behind the scenes, there is no apology, no passionate pleading for His life on the part of the prisoner, and what Pilate wanted above everything else was for this strange man to speak. When shall we learn the eloquence of silence? Pilate said, "Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?" And He answered him not a word. This intensified Pilate's anxiety and making a supreme effort to reassert himself he said, "Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?"

Jesus answered, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." The scene has taken a dramatic turn. It is not now Christ standing before Pilate, it is Pilate before Christ. It is Pilate who is being judged and he finds that the question he has just asked the multitude expresses his deepest thought:

"What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" That was a solemn moment for Pilate! This is a solemn moment for you! In a more real sense than you are aware your decision during this hour will decide your destiny. "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" This is a living question. It is a question which demands our deliberate and reverent attention. A more real question could not occupy our thoughts. The answer to this question more than any other has stood for the rise and fall of nations. In

getting Pilate to grant their request to crucify Christ the Jews thereby thought to destroy Him, but the crucified Christ was not destroyed. What His enemies did with Him to end Him was really the starting point of a momentous power, a power that has changed the current of the world's history and still governs the ages. Christ and Him crucified is the master force in history. He is the supreme commander of the world's forces to-day. We find Him everywhere and try as we may we are compelled to acknowledge Him the unavoidable Christ. As Dr. W. J. Dawson has suggested, "We met Him at our feasts, in our temples, in our streets, in our fields, among our law-makers, over against our treasuries, in our homes, among our children, at the burial of our dead."¹ Jesus is the most real person that we meet and the words of Pilate have become a National Question. "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" The very existence of nations depends upon their attitude to this question.

It was so with the Jews. They had privileges beyond compare. To them Christ came. To them He preached. Among them He laboured. In Galilee and Judea He was a familiar figure as He went about doing good, healing the sick, restoring the blind to sight, and raising the dead. He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. He lavished His love upon them, and pleaded with them, but in spite of His love

¹ *The Evangelistic Note.*

and compassion they rejected Him. That nation with a unique past, boasting a succession of elders and prophets who through faith had subdued kingdoms and wrought righteousness, stopped the mouths of lions and quenched the violence of fire: these, the children of the prophets, knew not the time of their visitation. As our Lord neared the city of Jerusalem,—Jerusalem once so renowned for her valiant sons, sitting secure as a queen among the nations, Jerusalem, extolled for her zeal and devotion to God, once the joy of the whole earth,—how did He view it? His view of it is given in one of the most pathetic passages in literature. “When He beheld the city He wept over it, saying, ‘If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.’ ”

Jerusalem wrote her doom in human gore when she cried, “His blood be on us, and on our children.” To-day the Jew is an outcast in the earth. He indeed is a man without a country; an exile from his native land.

What was true of the Jews was also true of the Greeks. As we study Plato’s philosophy and read

his *Ideal State*, we marvel at the range and grasp of his brilliant mind. We hardly can refrain from thinking that an Empire with such sons would impress and triumph over surrounding nations, and continue her march until she had completed the conquest of the world. But Greece was only as brilliant as she was short-lived, and how fearfully true are the words when applied to her, "The world by wisdom knew not God." When St. Paul came into contact on Mars Hill with some of the sons of Greece who spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or hear some new thing, they listened to him, but when they learned that his gospel was Christ and Him crucified, some mocked. Yet who will deny that Paul was preaching a gospel of which he need never be ashamed?

It was not Greece, however, but Rome, that was brought face to face with the question "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" Rome decided to crucify Him afresh, and to obliterate every reference to His name. War was declared on the Christians, and by a series of dire persecutions Rome did her utmost to crush the cause of the Nazarene. Although it meant penury, suffering, and death in its most revolting forms, thousands gladly laid down their lives, and eventually Christ conquered. The imperial might of Rome was impotent before the constraining love of Christ. And what shall we say more? Western civilization owes its victories to "Jesus which is called Christ." The most superficial ob-

server cannot fail to see that those nations which have risen from obscurity to power are those which have embraced Christianity. We talk very eloquently to-day about education and politics; and in the estimation of some these and not religion are the important questions. But the great probability is, that if we had had no Christianity there would be no education or civil rights of any worthy character. Who has given us our educational and moral standards? "Jesus which is called Christ."

When we begin to consider our statesmen, we find ourselves not so much concerned about what they have said as what they have done, not so much which party do they represent, as what do they stand for? Have they the best interests of their fellows at heart? Do they stand for justice and humanity: and before we are aware of it we are asking our statesmen what they are going to do with "Jesus which is called Christ"? Only by the recognition and application of Christian principles can modern nations hope to go on prospering. We belong to a nation of which we have every reason to be proud, and may we as loyal citizens from the least to the greatest take up the resolution of Abraham Lincoln, that prince among Christian statesmen. When the Civil War was raging a man said to him, "I hope God will be on our side."

"Sir," said Lincoln, "I have never yet asked myself whether God was on my side or not, but I

tell you what, sir, I am determined to be on God's side.”¹

“What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?” This is a Commercial Question. Some of you may be shocked at the idea of any one talking about commerce in a religious service. We have talked too long as though Christianity were for the Sabbath day, something to be laid carefully away with our Sunday clothes, too delicate to stand the wear and tear of every-day life. Unless Christian principles are introduced into commercial circles and practised in commercial life we may despair of national salvation, to say nothing of the salvation of the world. If you are not a better business man, more conscientious, fully trustworthy, deviating neither to the right hand nor to the left, because you are a Christian, then, in reality, you never have known Christ, or you have decided against Him, and voted for the release of Barabbas. How exceeding sinful and shortsighted people are who prefer Barabbas to Christ! How humiliating it is, in this the twentieth century to have to confess that Barrabas is still at large. Barabbas is a robber, it is his nature to take, and, given an opportunity, he will relieve you of all you possess. Christ gives and from an economic standpoint, if from no higher, you will one day acknowledge that “Godliness is profitable unto all things having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

¹ *The Divine Challenge.*

Whether you realize it or not, Jesus stands beside you as you work. He is near you as you buy and sell and get gain. And often He speaks to you and endeavours to ascertain what is going to be the end of all your efforts. "Take heed and beware of covetousness for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." May all our commercial enterprises be so conducted as to be an aid and not a hindrance, to the development of Christian character.

"What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" This is a Domestic Question. All who can speak from experience will bear witness that one of the grandest institutions we enjoy is the Christian home. Many a young man has wandered far astray, and as he wanders in the far country of sin he is indifferent to many calls, but there is one song he cannot listen to with indifference. It is "Home, sweet Home." What has Christ done for our homes? What has He done for Father? He has given him a father's heart and made him like work. We speak to-day, and rightly so, of the dignity of labour. We recognize the ennobling nature and influence of honest toil, but lest we forget that it is something comparatively new for men to regard manual labour favorably, I wish to remind you that when Plato wrote his *Ideal State* it never crossed his mind that a state could exist without slavery. Work

was fit only for slaves. Slaves were regarded as beings of an inferior order, and treated accordingly. A Roman could torture his slave and put him to death and no one asked the reason. To-day slavery has been abolished, and labour upon which the Roman looked down with disdain is honoured and appreciated. Every respectable man is employed; when he finds his right sphere he enjoys his work, and when the day's work is done there is a smiling welcome home.

What has Christ done for Mother? Mother! one of the dearest names in our language. Can we imagine what mothers have suffered, and how they have been degraded? Even to-day in heathen lands the mother is regarded as a being without a soul, and is treated with the indignity of a slave. In Christian lands, woman is not merely respected but revered, and she takes her place, by his side, as the helpmeet of man. As we value the love and care of our mothers, let us remember that we owe it to Christ.

What has Christ done for the child? In the days of His flesh, Jesus took a little child and set him in the midst. There he stands to-day. For him we live, for him we toil, for him we pray. In Rome a father could put his child to death and no one asked any questions, but Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Fathers! Mothers! Sons! and Daughters! you have heard a little of what Christ has done for

your homes. Then what are you going to do with "Jesus which is called Christ"? Is He a guest in your home? Does He share its joys and its sorrows? Can you imagine a more sublime sight than that of every member in the home kneeling around the family altar, as the father prays, "Behold me, and the children whom Thou hast given me?" Is yours a Christian home?

Finally this is an Individual Question. "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" What was the cause of Pilate's failure? Nothing more or less than public opinion, the fear of man; he was afraid of the crowd. Once again Jesus stands in the hall of judgment, not in Jerusalem, but at the bar of your conscience, and Pilate's question faces you. What are you going to do with it? Did you say you were going to laugh it off? Exercise a care lest you laugh and ignore this question until it is too late. God has given His best to save you from sin to holiness, and if you trample underfoot the blood of Christ the day may come when "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh." Like Pilate, Jesus is left on your hands. The question is not, am I a church member? or am I religious? the question is "What shall I do with Jesus?" It is to be feared that to some religious people Christ will say, "Depart from Me, I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity." If your pleasures are of such a nature as to come between you and Christ, what are you going to do with Jesus? Will you by your actions

crucify Christ afresh and cling to your sinful pleasure? It is not, what language shall we employ to express our contempt, our utter loathing for Pilate, as he stands hesitating and endeavouring to shirk his responsibility, and then against his better judgment falling miserably down and yielding to the request of an insane mob. The question which will be a savour of life unto life or of death unto death for you to decide now is, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?"

CHAPTER VI

AN URGENT CALL

And as Jesus passed forth from thence, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He saith unto him, "Follow Me." And he arose and followed Him.—Matt. IX, 9.

In our text we see our Lord on His way from one preaching service to another. Before going down from Capernaum to the sea-shore, He conducted a most inspiring service in a house in the city. What made this service so inspiring? As we consider the outstanding features of a good service, we acknowledge several answers might be given to this question. The service might have been inspiring because of the Preacher. It is always inspiring to hear a really great preacher, but what must it have been to hear Jesus preaching the gospel of the kingdom? The service might have been inspiring because it was well-attended. The attendance was large. The place was simply crowded; standing room was at a premium. A good congregation is always inspiring to a preacher, and while our Lord's inspiration did not depend on large congregations, we have reason to believe, He was greatly encouraged by the pres-

ence of so many people desirous of hearing a message from God. The service might have been inspiring because it was so representative. All classes were represented from the holy Pharisee to the despised Publican; and whether they believed or rejected the message, they heard it. They would, in all probability, speak of it to their friends, and to have "an Hebrew of the Hebrews" become a disciple would be a most inspiring achievement.

As a matter of fact, the service was inspiring because of an incident which occurred when it was in progress. Four men came carrying a friend on a mattress who was sick of the palsy. They sought admission by the doorway in vain. But nothing daunted they ascended to the roof of the house by the outside stairs, made an opening and lowered their friend through just in front of the Lord Jesus as He was preaching. If you and I had been in that congregation when those men began to break up the roof we would have been greatly annoyed. Perhaps it did annoy some of His hearers, but it did not annoy Christ. It was rather an alarming mode of procedure, and we can see the angry glances cast at these men, but not a word of rebuke from the Preacher. Where others saw men disturbing a religious service, "Jesus saw their faith." These men were in earnest, they dared to do the unusual to get to Christ. The sick man was healed of his infirmity, his sins were forgiven him, and what looked like spoiling

the service was the means of making it most inspiring for "immediately he arose, took up his bed, and went forth before them all: insomuch that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We never saw it on this fashion.' "

Turning from such an inspiring service to watch the Preacher go down to the sea-shore seems very trivial indeed, but it may be worth while. "And as Jesus passed forth from thence He saw." To me, it is of surpassing interest to learn what Jesus saw, both in and out of His services. The modern preacher on his way from one preaching service to another would probably see nothing of interest except his notes, but Jesus used His eyes. To Him the path from one service to another was full of possibilities. He was interested in everything that had any bearing upon His work. He saw the diamond in the rough. He saw promise and possibilities where others saw only the degraded and the outcast. "And as Jesus passed forth from thence He saw a man." There is nothing very remarkable in that. It would be nothing new to see a man between Capernaum and the sea-shore. When we go down to the sea-shore we are so self-centered that men appear to us as so many things, varying in importance as they contribute to our pleasure or comfort. But Jesus was not on a pleasure trip, He did not go down to the sea-shore for the good of His health. He went down to the sea-shore because it was a good place to preach, and as He went down "He saw a man."

It would be interesting to know what His prospective audience saw. Like them we probably would have been attracted by the amount of business being transacted at the toll-booth, or interested in the foreigners who were paying their dues, before passing along the great commercial highway. We might have remarked upon the well-filled money bags, or the money stored up in sight, but Jesus saw a man. He was not interested in the money in the toll-booth. He saw something more precious than all the gold in the Indies, He saw a man! We might have been excited by the crowd, but Jesus concentrated His gaze on a man. We talk about the masses, of society, of the classes, and of requiring so many hands to run the machinery of the world, but in spite of our distinctions Jesus sees men. He looks at the individuals. He sees a man in a crowd. He knows His man when He sees him, and in spite of adverse appearances He never makes a mistake. If we had been with Jesus as He went from the city down to the sea-shore and He had said to us, "I am looking for a man who will write the first gospel," we would have said, "Lord! We don't doubt your genius, but, in our opinion, you need not look there. The Publicans have a hard name, and generally speaking, they have a bad reputation. No! Lord, the toll-booth is not the place to look." Yes! We could have given several arguments against the probability of finding a suitable person there. But Jesus looked and "saw

a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom, and He saith unto him, 'Follow Me.' And he arose and followed Him." That man wrote the gospel which bears his name.

Let us take a look at the circumstances under which Jesus found him. He was sitting at the receipt of custom. "Along the north end of the sea of Galilee there was a road leading from Damascus to Acre on the Mediterranean, and on that road a customs-office marked the boundary between the territories of Philip, the tetrarch, and Herod Antipas. Matthew's occupation was the examination of goods which passed along the road, and the levying of the toll. A Jew serving on a great highway was prevented from fulfilling requirements of the Law, and was compelled to violate the Sabbath law, which the Gentiles, who conveyed their goods, did not observe."¹ Jesus found Matthew at his work. We are very apt to imagine that Jesus can only find men in church, such, however, is not the case. He can find men wherever men are to be found. To-day, as in the days of His flesh, our Lord visits our places of business as truly as He visits the church. Does such a thought ever cross your mental horizon, that Jesus visits you as you work? He comes to us as we buy and sell and endeavour to get gain. He comes when we least expect Him and asks us if we are content not merely with our wages, but with the kind of work we are turning out. When

¹ Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels.

we are tempted to countenance a dishonest transaction, He comes and suggests that we are getting the worst of the bargain, for he who lives by fraud shall perish by the same. In His presence we feel we cannot be anything but honourable. He comes to us when we grow impatient of adverse conditions, He reminds us that our bread and water is assured, and intimates that we are not merely engaged in making a living, but undergoing discipline to develop a life. Whether we recognize Him or not, we enter upon another day's work with a light heart, and our labour becomes a means of grace.

Matthew was so engrossed in business that he did not observe the Sabbath law. He had to work seven days in the week and apparently had no opportunity of hearing the mighty Prophet about whom everybody was talking. How graciously our Lord accommodates Himself to our circumstances. If Matthew cannot find time to go to hear Jesus, Jesus will go to visit Matthew. If you cannot come to church to worship Him, in the fellowship of His people, He will come home to you, and you may recognize Him in the breaking of the bread, in the opening of the sacred page, and in causing your heart to burn with you as He begins at Moses and expounds to you the Scriptures. He sends His servants into your homes with this promise to encourage them, "He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me." Adverse cir-

cumstances are no barrier to Christ. He sees us under all conditions. We may receive a surprise visit from our Lord, and when He comes let us ask Him to enter into partnership with us.

Having seen where Matthew was, and what he was doing, let us endeavour to see what kind of a man he was. He was a publican and whatever virtues he might possess he would not get much credit for them because a publican and a sinner were synonymous terms. "In Galilee the publicans had to collect, not for the imperial treasury (as in Judea), but for Herod Antipas, the tetrarch. But whether in the service of the hated Roman Emperor or of Herod Antipas, who was in complete subservience to him, the tax-gatherer was most unpopular with the Jews; for, apart from the obvious liability of the method to abuse, the mere fact of the money being thus raised for an alien power was detestable in their eyes. And no doubt the publicans were often drawn from the lowest ranks in consequence."¹ Matthew was the son of Alpheus. Who Alpheus was, or to what station in life he belonged we cannot determine, for we know nothing about him with the exception of his name. However, the fact is well established, that Matthew was a publican; for he designates himself thus in giving the list of the disciples. Although he wrote the gospel from the Jewish standpoint, and set forth the majesty of King Jesus, he is silent about himself with the excep-

¹ Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels.

tion of acknowledging that he was a publican.

Evidently he was not renowned as a teacher or preacher, for he is never mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as going on a preaching tour, or even of taking a public part in the Christian campaign. Although not gifted as a speaker, he excelled as a writer, and he has left a worthy memorial in the gospel which bears his name. Every man after his own order. When Jesus went in search of Matthew, He knew the kind of man he wanted. And although nobody would have been more surprised than he, on the day when Jesus saw him at his work, if it had been suggested that he would live to write a gospel, yet he did it and he did it well. In thinking of a tax-gatherer's becoming one of the literary artists of the world, we are forcibly reminded of what Christ can do for any man who responds to His call. Any man who yields himself unreservedly to Jesus Christ will not only become a revelation to the world, but a revelation to himself. There is a beautiful humility in Matthew's designation of himself as a publican. Humility is always becoming. Isaiah exhorts us to remember the rock from whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit from whence we were digged. Can we not say with the Psalmist, "I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath

put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God."

If the Pharisees had been asked for Matthew's character they would have given it without hesitation. He was a publican, and no one but a reprobate would be engaged in a business like that, He was a Sabbath-breaker and consequently ostracised from all decent society. Yet strange to say when Jesus was looking for one who would write the story of His earthly pilgrimage, He chose not a Pharisee but a publican.

Not many wise, not many mighty are called for the simple reason that the mighty and the wise are satisfied with themselves. They glory in their wisdom or they glory in their might. And nothing is so fatal to progress as satisfaction with one's self, whether it be with one's character or achievements. Jesus sees not merely what we are but what we may become. He discovers the slumbering giant and awakens him to action. He comes to publicans and sinners, to those who are conscious of their need of Him and says, "Publican, I want thee to become a prophet; Sinner, I want thee to become a saint."

The call of Matthew was very dramatic. It is a thrilling moment in the history of the soul when it responds to the call of the Master. "And as Jesus passed forth from thence, He saw a man, named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom; and He saith unto him, 'Follow Me.' And he arose and followed Him." This call was ad-

dressed to a busy man. That was the kind of man He was looking for. Jesus never calls a loafer. For that type of an individual, He has no use whatever. He was a tremendous worker Himself, He made every minute count. On one occasion, when His disciples prayed Him to eat bread, He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." The King's business required haste, and to extend the boundaries of His Empire. He wanted men of enterprise and enthusiasm. The watchword of His Kingdom is, "Work while it is day; for the night cometh when no man can work."

No one has a keener eye for a business man than Jesus. At a glance He can tell the mental and moral calibre of the man. One look, and He knows whether a man is occupying a position worthy of his talents. No leader in any sphere of labour has such a faculty for discovering men as Jesus Christ.

Our Lord is vitally interested in the working man. He is the Friend of all but especially of the burdened and the oppressed. He has championed the cause of the working man; and to every working man He comes to-day saying, "Follow Me!" Will you, like Matthew, respond? Do you plead that you cannot serve God in your business? Then, like Matthew, leave it, and the sooner the better. Do you plead lack of time to attend to religion apart from business hours? Then serve God in your business, and your whole

life will be transformed into one grand act of worship. The call of Christ is from sin to holiness, from death to life, from the power of Satan unto God. This call came not only to a busy man, but to a capable man.

Jesus has a purpose in every call and a place for every life. He imparts His Spirit unto His followers and they become new creatures. Old things pass away and all become new. He speaks to a young rake, saying, "Follow Me and I will make thee St. Augustine, one of the greatest of the Church Fathers." He speaks to a drunken, blaspheming tinker, saying, "Follow Me, and I will make thee John Bunyan, the immortal dreamer." He speaks to an obscure cobbler, saying, "Follow Me, and I will make thee, William Carey, the apostle of modern missions." He speaks to you, to-day, saying, "Follow Me, and I will show thee what great things thou must do for My name's sake."

How many of the publican class Christ has called! And what a noble army has responded. Will you respond? Jesus calls you. Shall He call in vain? Will it be put on record against you, "I have called and ye have refused?" Are you going to say to your Lord what Felix said to Paul, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will call for thee?" That convenient season never came. Matthew responded immediately and cheerfully. "And he arose and followed Him." Without any reluc-

tance, without any misgivings, he arose and followed Jesus in the way. Will any one dare to charge Matthew with indiscretion? Had Matthew declined the call, he would have lived like an ordinary publican and died unknown. But he obeyed! Consequently his name will never die. His Christian work is his perpetual memorial. Who then is willing, like Matthew, to follow Jesus all the way?

You ask if I am aware of the tremendous demand I am making; of what it means to follow Jesus all the way? Your thought is the price you will have to pay by becoming a Christian. It is a good thing to count the cost. You say, it meant little or nothing then to follow Christ, but consider what it will mean to-day! Think you it meant little or nothing to Matthew? It meant everything to him. It is highly probable that it meant more to him than it will mean to us. It cost him something to give up his position, for no man was in that business simply for the love of it. The man who wanted to make money quickly became a publican. What had induced Matthew to become a publican we know not, but this we do know, at the call of Christ he left all and became an ardent disciple. You are thinking of what it will cost to make the effort. Think deliberately what it will cost if you refuse the call. Some calls we cannot afford to ignore, and above all we cannot afford to ignore Christ's.

Matthew was proud of the call. And to cele-

brate this new departure in his life he made a feast in his own house, and invited a great multitude of publicans and others to meet his newly found Master and Lord. Matthew did not steal into the kingdom as though he were ashamed of such a proceeding. He was honoured by such a call and by a public reception in honor of the Master, and by his subsequent loyalty and devotion he endeavoured to prove himself worthy of that august occasion when the Son of God came to him, a sinful publican, and said, "Follow Me." History has proved that Jesus made no mistake in His man. He sought and found, not a preacher but a church historian.

Jesus is calling you. He has something for you to do. Let your response be as prompt and as hearty as that of Matthew.

CHAPTER VII

THE POSSIBILITIES OF THE AVERAGE MAN

And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.—Gen. XXXII, 27-28.

I SUPPOSE there is a tragedy in every life. At least, there is a tragedy in the life of every man who wanders away from God, and a double tragedy in the life of the man who never comes back. The experience I wish to portray is that of the man who has gone into the far country of sin, who has tasted its dead sea fruit, and who is resolved to return to his father's house.

That it is not always an easy matter to return is illustrated by the experience of Jacob. Jacob was born under the most favourable conditions. He was a son of pious parents, and doubtless the subject of many prayers. His father was a patriarch; and a divine messenger had said, respecting him and his brother, "the elder shall serve the younger." From the first there was a marked contrast between these twins. "And the boys grew; and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man dwelling

in tents." Jacob impresses us favourably, and even he was not a "born saint." Strenuous efforts have been put forth to prove his inherent goodness, but argument has had to rest on very slender evidence. Let us endeavour to see what he was by nature, also what he became by the power of divine grace. Jacob was no better and perhaps no worse than the rest of us. He is a fair specimen of the ordinary man.

His life was profoundly influenced by two men who did not have a beneficial effect upon him. These two men were Esau and Laban. They represent the two extremes in wickedness. Esau was a splendid animal. We admire him and we pity him, but we imitate him at our peril. He was a man who must have pleasure regardless of the price. Laban was an unscrupulous hypocrite. Esau was such an easy mark that Jacob was tempted to overreach him, while Laban was so far-seeing as to make capital out of Jacob. These two men are types of those who can always be found in the far country of sin, and strange as it may seem, they do not live together, but dwell near the opposite borders. Esau occasionally can take a wild excursion inland, but his home is near the border. He can be very religious at times. His sins are largely the results of neglect and indifference. Laban was much farther inland. He dwelt near the opposite border,—just a little removed from perdition. He had use for religion only in so far as it paid. His was the sin

of covetousness and duplicity. He deliberately planned injustice and was prepared to grow fat by oppression.

The sad experience of Jacob bids us beware of sin in its initial stages, of trying to gain the right by wrong means. "The wages of sin is death." This is a dread fact we are apt to overlook. At first sin allures and captivates. The more we meditate upon it, the more attractive it appears; until we are convinced that it would be folly not to avail ourselves of what seems to be a providential opportunity. It was thus with Jacob. He had been told by his devoted mother that he was to succeed his father. Esau, his brother, was of such a reckless disposition that he did not appreciate such an honour, and was clearly unfit to be entrusted with it. The more Jacob thought of the birthright the more determined was he to get it. One day while at his tent preparing a mess of red lentils, a favourable opportunity presented itself. Esau, who had been out on an unsuccessful hunting expedition, approached the tent in a famishing condition. As soon as he espied the mess of pottage he cried, "feed me I pray thee with that red." "And Jacob said, 'Sell me this day thy birthright,' . . . and he sold his birthright unto Jacob." Sin presented itself to Jacob in the light of an advantage. It was an opportune time for driving a shrewd bargain, but in reality it was taking a mean advantage. He had wronged his brother and he knew it. Conscience

rose in rebellion and charged him with overreaching, but he lulled it to sleep. At the outset sin always appears to be a decided advantage. A favourable opportunity presents itself for selfish gratification and indulgence. Nobody will know. Then why should I not embrace this opportunity? A mean advantage is taken of another's weakness, of another's ignorance, or of another's love, and the outraged monitor within proclaims the awful fact that God knows, that an indelible record has been made of the deed, and in a voice that refuses to be silenced it says, "Thou hast wronged thy brother, thou hast wronged thy sister, thou hast wronged thy home, thou hast wronged thy body, thou hast wronged thy soul."

One sin prepares the way for another. The sin of meanness prepares the way for falsehood and hypocrisy. The propagating power of sin is seen in the stealing of the blessing. Isaac had been told that the elder son should serve the younger, yet he determines to bless Esau. So about forty years before his decease he imagined he was at the point of death, and calling Esau he instructed him to go to the field, to bring venison, and to make savoury meat such as he loved that his soul might bless him before he died. Rebekah overheard what passed between Isaac and Esau, and evidently thinking that God's purpose would not be fulfilled, she determined to interfere on Jacob's behalf. Jacob loved his mother, and she led him into a snare. But he

knew he was doing wrong, and when he went into his blind father's presence he intended saying as little as possible. Having gone so far, he found it easier to go farther. One falsehood was needed to hide another; and when he left his father's presence he was a deliberate liar.

There was a good deal of selfishness in both parents. It is on record that "Isaac loved Esau because he partook of his venison." There are a great many of this kind of lovers in the world to-day, people who love you for what they can get out of you. If those with whom you associate do not love you for what you are, keep your eyes open. A young man with a well-filled purse always can find companions to sing, "He's a jolly good fellow," while they are drinking at his expense, but when his cash is gone, they suddenly remember an important duty they must perform without delay, and they leave the poor, deluded mortal friendless and forsaken. Selfishness, cruel and heartless, is the way of the world.

Jacob's parents were guilty of partiality. "Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison; but Rebekah loved Jacob." Rebekah, by interfering with the purpose of God, succeeded in undoing the very end she sought to achieve. Esau had disappointed his parents in his marriage, and so Rebekah tried by every possible means, as she thought, to keep Jacob at home. So she assisted him to deceive his father, but she was the one to be the most cruelly deceived. That piece of

dishonest work quickly bore fruit. Jacob had to fly before the fury of his enraged brother. His mother told him to flee to Haran and tarry a few days until his brother's fury had turned away. Jacob departed and his mother never saw him again.

Try as we may, we can hardly enter into Jacob's feelings as he stepped out from home. It is hard to leave with the good wishes of all behind, but when you have to bid farewell to all that memory holds dear because of your own deliberate sin, it is harder still. Turning away from the home of his childhood, the home of his youth and young manhood, Jacob knew that his own sin had closed the door behind him. His mind doubtless would be filled with the thoughts of sadness mingled with remorse. Oh, the tragedy of it! Driven from home by one's own evil deeds! Young people honour your homes! If you have to leave home in disgrace, you will find this to be a cold, cruel world, to say nothing of the broken hearts left behind. Let this truth burn into your soul. "The way of transgressors is hard."

Amid conflicting thoughts, Jacob walks on till eventide, and with a strange sense of loneliness he settles down for the night. That was a memorable night. As he slept he dreamed, "and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold!

the Lord stood above it and said, 'I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; . . . and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' " After receiving many exceedingly great and precious promises Jacob awoke and said, "'Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not.' And he was afraid, and said, 'How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.' "

Jacob was running away from home, but he could not get beyond the jurisdiction of God. Some of you are trying to run away from good influences, and some of you may be riding at a stretch-gallop into vice, but remember, there is a God above, and you cannot escape from Him. If we had a true conception of God's greatness, I believe we would be overawed. David sinned and when his iniquity bore fruit, and trouble came in like a flood he cried, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest." But he bethought himself and said, "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."

The Lord told Jacob that He would be with him, would bless him, and make him a blessing; yet such was his vision of God's resources that

he immediately said, "Give me enough to eat and to wear and if thou art able to do this thou shalt be my God." This goes to prove how near we may come to God without being made wise unto salvation. He with a tenderness surpassing human thought is constantly speaking unto the children of men, and giving them the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come, but their thoughts are so crammed with worldliness, they will not take time to consider their royal inheritance in Christ Jesus. Yes! It is possible to attend divine worship, and remain a stranger to the God of all grace.

Jacob continued his journey down to Haran, and there took up his abode. He seems to have become somewhat of an adept in making bargains, but Laban was more than a match for him. Shortly after his arrival he bargained for a wife, Rachel whom he loved, and Laban made him work fourteen years for seven years' wages. He was deceived repeatedly. His wages were changed ten times, but these deceptions were only the beginning of his sorrows. Here he began to reap the wild oats he had sown. He reaped for many years and a bitter harvest it was. If crafty at home, he is by no means reformed down in Haran. He waxes worse and worse, and stoops to practise deception whenever possible.

Reforms are seldom the result of running away from home. If you wish to live an upright life don't run away from home, run away from your

sins, run to "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

Eventually Jacob hears the call of God. "I am the God of Bethel, arise." God had not forgotten Jacob, nor His promise to him, although Jacob evidently had forgotten God. How patiently and persistently God follows us with His offers of mercy. He comes to you to-night as He came to Jacob of old, saying, "I am the God of thy youth, arise. Thou hast been down here in the Haran of sin too long. Shake off thy filthy garments, and accept the robe of my righteousness which fadeth not away." I beseech you to give heed to the voice of God. There is something noble and majestic in you which cannot find rest in the foreign land of sin.

Jacob was a fugitive, exiled from home, deceiving and being deceived, yet his life was preserved. Esau and Laban schemed but they could not touch him. God had set his hand upon Jacob for good. Although you have been unfaithful to the highest within you, and wandered far from the path of rectitude, do you not marvel at the providence of God in sparing you? God has watched over you with incessant care, when you cared little or nothing for yourselves, and unless you deliberately refuse, there is a sphere in which you are going to be made eminently useful. You may yet become mighty men of God.

Jacob stole away from Laban like a thief. True to his character, it was beyond his power

to change. Jacob was a deceiver by nature. If he had not met God at Bethel, he doubtless would have become one of the cleverest scoundrels of his time. God only knows where we might have been, had we not been restrained by the influence of good people around us. But a time comes when devices fail and clever forgeries are laid bare, and all the concoctions of a lifetime pass before the vision with failure and defeat written over every one. The crisis in Jacob's life has arrived. All his schemes avail nothing; and the marvel in this time of tragedy is that he determines to meet God at Bethel. Men are able to sail down the smooth stream of time farther and farther away from God; but there is one storm in the life of all in which they are saved or lost.

While prosecuting his journey to Canaan, Jacob sent messengers to tell Esau of his approach, and if possible to find grace in his sight. The messengers returned saying, "We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him." Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. Things are looking serious for poor, penitent Jacob. He is in a terrible plight. What can he do? To fight he is unprepared. To retreat is impossible. Then what can he do? He must act quickly for Esau is coming and four hundred men with him. In this perilous hour he remembers the promises of the God of his father; and for the first time

in his life he prays.

Do you remember the first time you really and consciously prayed? "And Jacob said 'O God!'" If we pray when in trouble there is no doubt about our sincerity. After prayer, Jacob took a number of his cattle, divided them into droves, and sent them by the hands of his servants as a present to Esau. Then he sent all that remained across the brook Jabbok, "and Jacob was left alone."

Before Jacob will be fit to enter and possess the promised land his nature must be changed. As Jacob, the supplanter, he cannot enter the land of promise. "And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him. And he said, 'Let me go, for the day breaketh.' And he said, 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.' And he said unto him, 'What is thy name?' And he said 'Jacob.'" My name is supplanter. In this reply there was a humble confession of his subtle scheming nature. I have been an overreacher, a deceiver, my life has been an acted lie. I confess and deplore the fact that by name and nature I am a supplanter. To his open confession the divine wrestler replied, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."

The sorrows of the night are passed, Jacob emerged from that inevitable struggle a conquerer. He is Jacob the defrauder no more, for old things have passed away, and all have become new. He is henceforth to be known as Israel, a prince who has power with God and prevails.

Many men have a stained past, but if they are now turning the world upside-down by their prayers, it is conclusive evidence that they have been abundantly pardoned and turned from the power of Satan to God. The demand of these critical times is for men who can pray. Praying men are the salt of the earth, the light of the world. Wilberforce began a crusade against slavery. Men laughed him to scorn, but he laboured on until England was shaken from centre to circumference, and the name of Wilberforce and Liberty became a household word. What was the secret of his success? Wilberforce knew how to pray. Oh for a baptism of divine power which will make us men like Luther, Knox, and Wesley!—men who revolutionized the world by their prayers. They were moral giants in their day and generation.

But heroes for God and humanity have not all become mere names of a glorious past. The leaders and reformers of to-morrow are to be found in our churches to-day. The call of Christ comes to you saying, "Arise!" Respond to the call! Rise to the occasion and play the man! If in your hearts you know that you are supplanters,

defrauders, that you are living beneath your privileges, that God and the world have a right to expect greater things of you; if these are your true sentiments, there is hope for you, and by the power of the Holy Ghost you may become princes and have power with God and prevail. You too must meet God in Christ. The crisis of your life has arrived. Act now! Plead the promises of God, the mighty promises of pardon, of peace, of adoption and power, those glorious promises which are all "Yea" and "Amen in Christ," and you shall be saved, and go forth to bless the world.

CHAPTER VIII

A MORAL TRAGEDY

He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.—John XIII, 30.

THE history of Judas is full of warning and instruction. We are favoured with an account of his call, of his work, and of his exit from the stage. Knowing the end of his career, from the beginning, we are liable to imagine that he was a failure from the outset. However we may speculate about this idea, there is nothing in the narrative to support it, and besides, it is contrary to everyday experience. Many a man has begun well, has given promise of becoming a bright and shining light, has betrayed his trust, yielded to inclination, to pleasure, to passion, and ultimately gone out into the night. To say what some people who apparently have no time for religion, are continually saying, "If I'm born to be saved, I'll be saved; and if I'm born to be lost, I'll be lost," is to subscribe to the creed of Fate. The sooner we give the lie to such an unchristian notion the better. It arises from the teaching which is so rampant to-day, and which is so persistently taught by materialists, that man is a ma-

chine, and therefore not responsible for his actions, whether they are good, bad, or indifferent. If man is not responsible for his actions, then Christianity is a delusion, and the sooner we pull down our churches and burn our Bibles the better.

But man is a morally accountable being. This doctrine of non-responsibility only needs to be looked at to be condemned. If there is no such thing as sin, and man is not morally responsible for his actions, it is not only religion that will have to go; everything that belongs to law and order, to honour and justice, will have to go with it. Let us not delude ourselves, we are morally responsible for our actions. Obligation is rooted and grounded in our nature. God has given us the awful power of choice. We may choose good, and we may choose evil. What we do, we do deliberately.

Before we subscribe to the creed of Fate let us acquaint ourselves with the plain teaching of Scripture. St. Peter writes, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." St. Paul states, "God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

Some people profess to believe that Judas had to be lost. If we were more fully acquainted with our Bibles we would see that he had repeated

warnings and opportunities to turn from the path he deliberately chose. The career of Judas is a true commentary of sin in its workings. He is a type of the man who is only partially spiritual. He heard Christ's call and accompanied Him as "He went about doing good," but he was not fully consecrated to his holy task. He compromised with evil until he was led captive by the devil at his will and committed an act, the nature of which makes every honest man tremble at the possibilities of his own sinful nature.

In reviewing the life of Judas let us not sit in judgment upon him, rather "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." First of all then let us glance at his life as an apostle. It is evident that at the beginning of his apostolic career, Judas felt the thrill of a great emotion. This is the only way we can reasonably account for his becoming a follower of Christ. There must have been that act of renunciation which every man makes who leaves all to follow Christ. It means a great deal to follow Christ in these days, but it meant a great deal more then. There was the question of his home and its associations which Judas cheerfully left. It means something to leave home. It means a great deal to a father when his son leaves home. There is a great deal of anxious thought of which the son knows little or nothing. I have read of a father who accompanied his son to the railway station. The son was going to try his fortunes on the troubled

sea of the world. As the father bade his son good-bye he said, with a face that revealed his strong emotion, "If you disgrace me, it will break my heart." If it means something to a father when his son leaves home, what does it mean to a mother? Only a mother knows! We may surmise a little as we see an occasional tear steal down her cheek, as we hear her loving counsel; and as we see her retire to her room to pray for the well-being of her boy. It means something to a youth who is leaving home, it may be for a town or city far away, and when at last he finds that the domestic tie has been severed and he is alone in a strange place, he retires to his room to meditate, to live again those glorious days of childhood, to think perhaps for the first time seriously of all the love and care that has been lavished upon him by his devoted parents. And he vows that he will do all in his power to be a credit to them. Blessed indeed is the youth if at that moment he drops on his knees, and by faith puts his hand into the hand of Christ.

Then there was the question of occupation. We are not in a position to say what enterprise Judas was engaged in when Christ called him but no doubt it would be worthy of his talents. There was no gainsaying the fact that Judas was a clever young man. His talents were recognized immediately by Christ who made him the treasurer of the Apostolic band. It is the young man of unquestioned ability who receives our ad-

miration. It is the young man of indisputed integrity who commands our respect. It is the brilliant young man who is most exposed to the fierce blast of temptation. Whatever enterprise Judas was engaged in, he gave it up to follow Christ. Then last, but not least, there was the question of pride. There is little doubt that Judas, as a talented young man, stood well in the good graces of his fellow citizens. To run counter to their wishes, to break with them, would require no mean moral effort. To throw in his lot with Jesus of Nazareth, who was making a bold attempt to achieve the impossible, would be regarded by his friends as an act not merely of folly but of insanity. Even in our own times, after centuries of the indisputable benefits of Christianity, when young men begin to follow Christ they are labelled by the worldly wise as fools and madmen. If young men find it necessary to take a determined stand to-day, what must it have meant then when everybody who wanted to be recognized as somebody looked askance upon the strange Man who made no secret of His intention of establishing a kingdom of God, a kingdom which was "not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost"?

It is easy for us to imagine with what joy we would have hailed the call to be an apostle, but if the Lord Christ were walking our streets to-day, as He did in the days of His flesh, and we

heard Him denouncing as a hollow sham the religion of some of our most prominent church members, I'm afraid we would pass by on the other side. But Judas, and let us not hesitate to give him his due, left all and followed the Man of Galilee. Yes! He left all! He made the grand renunciation. He left all that was behind and then! Oh! How we would like to picture his triumphs as an apostle! But facts are against us. He signally failed to grasp in its fullness the life and the vigour which Christ sought to impart. As far as he went, he did splendidly, and had he absorbed the spirit of the Master, caught His imperial vision, and thrown himself body and soul into the work, there is every reason to believe that he, too, like Peter and James and John, would have gone on to attain glory, honour, and immortality.

The tragedy of his life is that his enthusiasm was short-lived. He lost his first love. His ardour dwindled to conventional conformity, and while he kept up a respectable appearance before the Lord Christ, his heart was far from Him.

What is wrong with our churches to-day? Is it not precisely this: that we are half-hearted? That our attention is too much divided, that we are endeavouring to serve God and Mammon? This half-heartedness is in the pulpit as well as in the pew. Is the charge true, so frequently made, that we preach as though we were almost ready to apologise for the content of the message

which has wrought more radical changes than all other messages combined? The charge may be quite uncalled for, but, for the sake of Him whose we are and whom we serve, let us give ample evidence that we believe the truths we proclaim. "If the trumpet shall give an uncertain sound who shall prepare himself for battle?" If there is no danger, why any need for alarm? If a lion in our midst got loose, we would quickly overcome our reserve. We might even risk our lives to save a child from his terrible jaws, and with the handiest available weapon we would challenge the beast to mortal combat. What we need to realize is that we are daily exposed to evils infinitely more aggressive than any lion that roams the wilds. Our fathers used to say, "The devil goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour." And they preached as though they believed it. Now, some of us say quite candidly, "There is no lion." Others of us are saying, "There may be a lion, but in any case he has lost his teeth." And a number of us, by our indifferent attitude are saying, "Let him roar." Brethren! our half-heartedness is perilous. Beware! lest in our case, it lead into the gulf into which Judas by transgression fell.

Is it not lamentable that young preachers should be studying the latest commentary to see if they are still to believe in a devil? My experience leads me to remark that they do not need to go so far. If the devil could demoralize an

apostle who then can be saved? No compromising Christian can be saved. One of the glaring defects of present-day religion is that so many of us have a name to live and are dead. But if we are alive in Him we need not fear. So long as we are loyal to Christ we are invulnerable. Too many of us who are preaching the gospel are like lions chained. Our diction must be faultless, and we must of necessity be held in by cultured restraint. One feels like saying to the advocates of restraint, of the man of God who is so liberally endowed, "Loose him, and let him go." Oh to be swayed with a passion for righteousness! To recognize fully, and to feel keenly the tremendous issues at stake! The awful possibility of men becoming traitors or saints, a Judas or a St. Paul!

The subtle forces of evil are still at work in the home, in the church, and in the world. Consider who Judas was. He wasn't a heathen, he was a Christian, and a Christian apostle at that. If the devil could take possession of an apostle, under the very eye of Christ, we should realize once for all that nothing but whole-hearted devotion to Christ and His cause will save us, and the people to whom we preach. You may still contend that Judas was not an apostle at heart. Possibly not. But who are we to sit in judgment against Judas? Will any of us affirm that our motives are without alloy, that our loyalty is beyond question? If we rightly read our hearts,

we will have no Pharisaic thoughts nor harsh words to level against the man who became a traitor.

This leads us to the oft repeated question: Why did Christ choose Judas as one of the twelve? The inference underlying this question is that Christ saw the end from the beginning. Even though He did, one thing is certain: The Lord had a perfect right to call "unto Him whom He would." Is it not possible that Christ chose Judas to avert a great moral disaster? He chose him because He saw in him great possibilities both for good and evil. He saw the bent of his nature and, in His compassion, gave him the unique privilege of making his calling and election sure, before His eyes. When Judas responded to the call of Christ he was full of high and holy aspirations, and possibly he vowed in his heart, by his loyalty and devotion to become the very chiefest apostle. The tragic close of his career must not blind us to the fact that at the outset there was a most promising beginning. If we are so interested in our Lord's choice of Judas, has it ever dawned upon us to ask why He has chosen us? "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." Christ sees a divine possibility in every one of us. He never fails to see the diamond in the rough, and had Judas been true to His Lord, the story of his life would have been very different.

When did Judas begin to go astray? That is

hard to determine. We only can conjecture. The only man who could have told us was Judas. Every individual who is trifling with, or being driven almost to desperation through secret sin could give us a fairly good idea as to when it was first encouraged, if he would. Very small and almost imperceptible are the beginnings of sin, but how quickly it grows to a giant before whom we quiver in dismay! The first hint we get of the apostasy of Judas is given by our Lord, about a year before His crucifixion. "But there are some of you that believe not." Jesus knew what was going on in the heart of Judas long before He gave this first gentle rebuke. A greater significance is given to many of our Lord's remarks when we remember the disloyalty, the dishonesty, and the consequent disaster of "one of the twelve." Judas started on the down grade when he began to encourage and entertain disloyal thoughts about the Master. What is the cause of disloyalty? Unbelief! If you begin to doubt people, if you cease to believe in them or their principles, you will soon cease to love them. What led to this change in one who began so bravely, who promised so well? Judas was disappointed. He had expected something different, and so had all the disciples. They entertained hopes of a political kingdom and of an honoured place in the cabinet. They were soon informed of their delusion, for Jesus told them plainly that His kingdom was not of this world. He tried

to educate them to the idea that the Kingdom of God was something more impressive, something more magnificent, something more enduring than they had ever dreamed. Consequently the eleven became more attached to their master. Their lives were transformed by faith and hope and love, but not so Judas. He gradually became embittered, and instead of growing in grace he became absorbed in side issues. His disappointment developed into unbelief. How full of pathos are our Lord's words, especially when we consider His persistent efforts to get Judas to share the same spiritual vision that He was seeking to impart to the rest of His disciples! "But there are some of you that believe not." The measure of a man's love is determined by his faith. Great faith bespeaks a great love. There are two kinds of unbelief, intellectual and emotional. They are intimately related. When one dies the coffin may be ordered for the other. Of intellectual unbelief we have very little to fear. What we do need to fear, and that persistently, is infidelity of the heart. This is where Judas fell down. He ceased to love ardently, passionately, and his affections which had been bestowed upon his Lord were transferred. It follows with unerring precision that when a man ceases to love the Lord with a strong, healthy devotion, he ceases to live as every lover should live. In pleading for a whole-hearted devotion of ourselves to Christ it may not be amiss to say, "Thou

shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, and with all thy might." Let us beware of "infidelity of the heart!" We never know where it may lead. What a sorry sight to see a man transferring his love for the Lord to "the love of money."

How thoroughly Judas was out of sympathy with Christ and His Teaching is evidenced by his remarks at Bethany when Mary opened an alabaster box of ointment "and anointed the feet of Jesus!" "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" He was quite insensible to the fragrance of Mary's immortal deed. He begrudged the loss of three hundred pence, and received a well-deserved rebuke from the Master. John throws a flood of light on the besetting sin of Judas when he replies, "This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." By this time Judas had sunk so low that he was dishonest. He had cultivated the pernicious habit of pilfering. He waxed worse and worse until Jesus said, "One of you is a devil," but every warning was heard by Judas without the slightest concern. In that eloquent act of our Lord, when He washed the feet of His disciples, He washed the feet of Judas. Yes! He washed the feet of one who was already contemplating His betrayal. That was enough to soften a heart of stone, but there was no response from Judas. When He

had finished the Lord said, "Ye are clean, but not all." Shortly after He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." This startling intimation filled the hearts of those eleven honest men with dismay and fearing lest they might be foiled by the deceitfulness of their own hearts they eagerly asked, "Lord, is it I?" They were all deeply grieved but Judas, and it seems after the question had gone the rounds that, to save his face, he said; not, "Lord, is it I?" but, "Is it I, Rabbi?" The breach was widening between him and the Master. Our Lord's reply is full of significance. "What thou hast said, there is no need for me to say."

It is painfully apparent that when a man is untrue to Christ he becomes untrue to himself, he loses his self-respect, he sacrifices his honour, and after that he is capable of anything, even treachery and suicide. All previous entreaties, all previous warnings have failed, and now the final crisis has come. What will Judas do? Will he confess the detestable part he has been playing? Not he! He receives the sop, goes "immediately out, and it was night." The blackness of that awful night has never been relieved. It is always night when a man turns his back upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Up to this time Judas had been tempted of the devil. Now he who long ago transferred his affections, transfers his services from Christ to Satan. He becomes demon-

possessed. And not content with deserting he determines to betray the Master with a kiss for thirty pieces of silver. Can you imagine a deed more unspeakable?

Yet Judas does not stand alone. You regard such an act as his with abhorrence, but Judas did not become a traitor in a day. This soul tragedy can be traced to waning zeal, to disloyalty to Christ. What of your affections? Where are they placed? Do you love gold more than you love God? Is your creed "Get money honestly if you can, but get it?" Beware! "What?" you say, "are you charging respectable people with betraying Christ?" Yes! We have betrayed Him, and often for less than thirty pieces of silver.

One more glance at Judas. "When he saw" Jesus condemned the full significance of his diabolical deed, burst in upon him, and rushing into the presence of the chief priests, he cried, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." He threw down the money and then went out and hanged himself. How heart-rending is the last sermon Judas preached! "I have betrayed innocent blood." O Judas, why didst thou not turn and glance at the Saviour? His look might have broken thy heart, as it broke Peter's heart, and thou mightest have been saved, even in the eleventh hour! Christ did not expel Judas. He left Christ, and the last word recorded of him is, that he went "to his own place." That, and no other, in the end, will we

all find. What place are we preparing for? The money we sell our souls for, we are going to leave behind, so that those who led us as oxen to the slaughter may buy an "Aceldama," a "field of blood." As we meditate upon the tragic close of a career that opened so full of promise, let us remember that disloyalty may end in disaster, and reverently pray

"More love to Thee, O Christ,
More love to Thee!"

CHAPTER IX

A RECALL, OR THE MAN WHO CAME BACK

Go . . . tell His disciples and Peter.—Mark XVI, 7.

IN the gospels the character of Peter is very early portrayed. He is shown to us in his glory on the heights, also in the valley, crest-fallen and ashamed. That we may form a true estimate of his worth, all sides of his character are brought under our gaze. He comes on the scene a sturdy fisherman, he plays a dramatic part, and makes his exit from the stage as a martyr. He made huge blunders, but these must not blind us to the fact that he was a great man, he was a diamond in the rough, and he did a work for God, the greatness and extent of which eternity alone will fully reveal. Let us consider briefly his life and work. Before we venture to criticise Peter, it will be necessary for us to recall our own experience to see if it has all been sunshine, if it has all been singing, if it has been one long uninterrupted triumph. If it has, we will not be able to sympathize with the failings of Peter. It will be quite foreign to us why he so often made mistakes. But if our experience has not been a brilliant achievement, if there have been times

in our Christian career when we felt like stealing away into the darkness rather than walking in the light, if we have been down in the valley through some humiliating experience, if since we began to serve God we have had dark days as well as bright, then there are some useful lessons to be taught us by the ups and downs of Peter.

To begin with, let us look at his devotion. His devotion may be summed up in his call, his candour, his courage, and his confession. Before he became a disciple he was arrested by the fiery preaching of John the Baptist. The message of that stern preacher of righteousness made a profound impression upon Peter. He became an ardent seeker for the Truth. To his habits of temperance and frugality, he added the habit of piety. He identified himself with the great preacher of righteousness. He listened with awe to every message, and his imagination was fired by the prospect of the coming of the mighty one who would baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

One day Andrew, his brother, with a new light in his eye and a new ring in his voice, came and said, "We have found Him," and he took Peter to Jesus. Jesus was impressed with Peter as soon as He saw him, and gave him the name by which we know him. As yet Peter was not an apostle, but he was a Christian, and when, some months later, Jesus passed by the place where Andrew and Peter were fishing, He called them.

"And straightway they left their nets, and followed Him." When Christ called, Peter was ready. Without hesitation or reluctance, he left all. He did not begin to weigh the pros and cons, he knew that the Person who had captured his affections wanted his services, and straightway he followed Him.

What did it mean for Peter to respond to the call of Christ? Some people say it did not mean much, as he had not much to leave. However that may be, he was whole-hearted in his response. On another occasion he said, "Lo! we have left all and followed Thee." Whatever that all was it would cost an effort to leave it. There were his boat and his nets, and with these he had earned his living. But whatever the cost, whatever the sacrifice, Christ calls. Therefore farewell boats, nets, and friends, henceforth I am going to follow Jesus. Can we say we have left all?

Peter's immediate response to Christ's call was prophetic. He always decided quickly. He was essentially a man of action. His candour was sublime. He was so natural and exuberant that wherever he put in an appearance the place became instinct with life. There was a delightful uncertainty about Peter. We are not always sure what he will do or say, but we can count on his doing or saying something. The social instinct was strongly developed in him. He was easy to get acquainted with, and when he comes upon the

scene we begin to feel at home. Peter was almost a total stranger to reserve. Some good people maintain that Peter talked too much. Perhaps so, but if a certain few talk too much in the Lord's presence, do not a great many of us talk too little? We are indebted to Peter for talking. If he had not done so we would not have had such an interesting new Testament. We know more about Peter than any of the disciples. He had an honesty of purpose, and an integrity of soul that we cannot but admire. One day the Lord borrowed Peter's boat, "and He sat down, and taught the people out of the ship." When He had finished speaking He asked Peter to launch out into the deep, and let down the nets for a draught. With delightful candour he said, "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing, nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net." 'I am an experienced fisherman, and I don't think it's any use, but we'll try it anyway.' "And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake." Peter was astonished beyond measure. He felt he was in the presence of the Master Fisherman; One who knew infinitely more about fishing than he did.

Peter's courage was as pronounced as his candour. While faith was struggling into being in timorous souls, Peter's was learning to walk. His courageous venture upon the water was simply grand. He is the only fisherman so far as

my knowledge goes, who has the unique distinction of having walked upon the water. He was ready at a moment's notice to put Christ to the test, and by so doing achieved the impossible. It is of the very nature of faith to attempt and accomplish the impossible. O that Christ may be as real to us as he was to Peter!

Peter's courage was one of the chief elements of his character, but even his courage pales before his confession. When told by His disciples, of the controversy among the people as to who He was, Jesus asked His disciples, and Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." His confession marks an epoch in the training of the twelve. There was a loyalty about Peter, he was a born leader and his devotion to his Lord left nothing to be desired. He enjoyed fellowship with Jesus for three years. He laboured faithfully to extend the Kingdom, went on a missionary tour, and even cast out devils in the name of Christ.

Some of us were brought to Christ in a similar manner to Peter. Some John the Baptist alarmed us by the announcement that even now the axe was laid at the root of the tree, that the advent of a new order was at hand, and before our wondering eyes, he cried, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Or some Andrew, some modest but enterprising Andrew, came and said, "We have found the Messias," and he brought us to Jesus. Like Peter we may have done great things for God.

We may have preached the gospel and even cast out devils in the name of Christ. We may have known Christ more than three years, and our devotion to our Master may be unquestionable, but possibly, like Peter we have yet many things to learn.

Shall we now take a look at Peter's mistakes. Peter was very self-reliant. He had a great amount of confidence regarding his own ability. Peter to him was a very important person. He sometimes tried to dispute the point with the Master and because of his self-assertiveness, he often descended quickly from the mount into the valley. After his inspiring revelation from heaven regarding the divinity of his Lord, Christ said, "Blessed are thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Immediately after this hearty commendation, the Lord began to speak of what He must suffer in Jerusalem. And Peter, who had not yet learned that we pass through death into life, "began to rebuke Him saying, 'Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee.' But He turned, and said unto Peter, 'Get thee behind Me, Satan; thou art an offence unto Me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.'"

On another occasion our Lord went up into a mountain, taking with Him Peter and James and John, and was transfigured before them. Moses and Elias appeared, and Peter wanted to

build three tabernacles. This was a great blunder. A Christ always on the transfigured mount would not be able to meet the needs of perplexed disciples, a distracted father and a demon-possessed boy below. A transfiguration experience, without contact with the struggling world, would be a delightful experience, no doubt, but it would not tend to make Peter a very strong or a very useful saint. I believe Peter fully intended to prove himself a valiant Christian soldier when he said, "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." But Peter did not know himself as his Lord knew him. He had great lessons in humility to learn before he could be of any real service to Christ. When the disciples were contending who should be greatest, Peter was one who thought he had a right to the first place.

As the earthly career of our Lord neared its close He warned Peter that he would deny Him, but Peter protested, "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee." The next scene is in Gethsemane. The Lord was exceeding sorrowful, and if ever He needed the sympathy and prayers of His disciples it was then. Peter was one who was asked to watch and pray while the Master underwent His dreaded experience. An hour elapsed, and the Lord returned to find Peter, what? Sharing with Him in sweating great drops of blood? Pouring forth his entreaties to God that He will strengthen His

Master? This same Peter who a few hours before declared his readiness to die with Him—how does He find him? Does He find the enthusiastic Peter praying and prevailing before God? Alas, No! A great change has passed over Peter. He is asleep! This is the sign of a threatening storm. The enemies of the Son of God are at hand. He is betrayed, Peter awakes and follows afar off. The inevitable result follows. The storm breaks, and Peter the great is fallen. He denies his Master in this grave crisis. He loses his courage and his honour before an insinuating maid. "Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, 'I know not the man.' And immediately the cock crew."

As the followers of Christ, none of us have reached absolute perfection. There was a time when we thought we were nearing perfection, but now we see it afar. Like Peter, we have made mistakes. When we have attended a transfiguration convention we almost have forgotten the perishing multitudes. When we first began to serve the Lord we thought we were somebody, and we determined to live a life minus mistakes. We had great revelations of God's goodness and at times we did exploits. With Peter we felt like saying, "Though all men forsake Thee, yet will not I." But have we lived up to our ideals? No! When we were most urgently needed to charge the forces of unrighteousness; when it was imperative for us to come up to the help of

the Lord against the mighty, we failed. And, we must confess the scandal before high Heaven, we were asleep! The Lord have mercy upon us!

And bad as that was, there is something even worse. Some of us are asleep now! Can it be that we form part of a sleeping church? This is an alarming state of affairs. The church asleep and the devil awake. May God in His mercy arouse us from our slumbers! We have neglected to watch and pray, we have walked afar off, we have denied our Lord. What a shipwreck we have made of it! How we wish we had given more heed to the danger signal, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Like Peter, by our negligence and selfishness we have thrown our crowns in the dust.

Let us now look at Peter's repentance. Peter was in the mire, his fall had been real and great. But he had not dropped out of his Master's sight, for in the very act of denying his Master, "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." Only a look!—a look of injured love—but it broke Peter's heart. That never to be forgotten look reminded Peter of his Lord's warning words. "And Peter went out and wept bitterly." What anguish! What bitterness crushed his spirit! What have I done? I have basely denied my Lord! Can there be any forgiveness for such cowardice at such a time as this? There He is in the midst of the soldiers! Look! They smite

Him! they spit upon Him, and, oh! horrible to relate, they have crucified Him, but mine is the greater sin; for I have not merely forsaken Him but denied Him! Now I am of all men most miserable for Christ is dead and the last word He heard from my lips was one of base denial. What! Christ dead! No! Peter. He lives and He has sent you a message, "Go, tell my disciples and Peter I go before you into Galilee: there shall ye see me." It's just like Him to send a message like that, and although covered with confusion I am going to Him. Yes Peter! Go direct to Jesus! As soon as He saw him, the Lord saw that Peter was a changed man. Three times He asked him the same question, "Simon Peter, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Peter confessed his love, and in reply to the question asked for the third time said, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." If we have sinned, let us with Peter return unto the Lord. He is waiting to forgive us, and will remember our sins against Him no more. He wants every one of us to help in the extension of His kingdom.

This time we leave Peter in a prayer meeting. He is in the right place and if we are going to be of use to our Master, we cannot do better than to join him. Let us now briefly look at Peter's wonderful career after Pentecost. Peter is one of those who has been told to wait for the promise of the Father. "And when the day of

Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the spirit gave them utterance." A remarkable change has been wrought in Peter. He has been transformed by the power of the Holy Ghost. He is now fully instructed; fully equipped for service and to work he goes with a will.

Spirit-filled Christians could not hide in obscurity. They came forth, and were soon the centre of attraction. As they proclaimed the gospel message, the people were amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, "What meaneth this?" "Others mocking said, 'These men are full of new wine.'" New wine has been responsible for a great many demonstrations, but these men are intoxicated with the wine of God. Peter began to preach. To his wondering audience he said, "These men are not filled with wine as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.'" Peter

preached a sermon such as the people had never heard. He charged them with the death of the Son of God, and told how God had raised Him up to be both Lord and Christ. He preached with such power that his hearers were pricked in their hearts and cried out to Peter, and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" As a result of that sermon about three thousand people believed, but this was only the beginning of Peter's wonderful career.

Now he naturally became a recognized leader in the Christian church. He proved himself to be both courageous and courteous. To him fell that honour of opening a door to the Gentiles. To him we are greatly indebted for the gospel according to St. Mark, he wrote two epistles, and eventually died as a martyr.

Peter's career is most encouraging to those who realize they have failed, and who are determined to come back. Thank God for the reclaimed Peters! O you Peters! what powers are slumbering in your nature! What glory yet awaits you! Come back! Christ is calling for you. Seek His face, seek the fulness of the spirit, wait upon God until you too are baptized with the Holy Ghost.

And what shall I say more? Are we not all Peters? And the tragedy of our Christian experience is that we not only have denied our Lord, but in too many instances we are living on the wrong side of Pentecost. "Have ye received

the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" May our Father in heaven baptize us now and send us forth, like Peter, to see "signs and wonders wrought in the name of Jesus."

CHAPTER X

CHRISTIAN ATHLETES

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint.—Is. XL, 31.

THIS is one of the many passages containing such a wealth of suggestion that one is at a loss which line to follow. When we look into the heart of this verse we see strength and wings, also the promise of walking, or even running without faintness or fatigue. It provokes thought along so many avenues that I have decided to take you along one known to the athlete. Strength and wings, energy and endurance, whatever else they suggest, they are indispensable to every would-be athlete. There are very few healthy people who do not admire the athlete. He is so strong, his body is so well-proportioned, his muscles are so well-developed, and he is so clever as to captivate the eye and win the applause of all who hope to win their laurels. The grace and ease with which the scratch man wins the race arouses the enthusiasm of one and all. Great hopes are entertained, and extravagant demands are made upon a favourite athlete, by his

loyal supporters. Should the athletic reputation of the town, school, or college be at stake, they centre their hopes in him. And when he goes into the race, he goes in not merely for exercise, or to trifle with the reputation of his school. He goes in with one grim determination, and that is to win. When the race has been won, and the threatened reputation saved, all the students are simply delirious with delight. He is the hero of the occasion, and is lionized by all with whom he is identified.

But sometimes a star performer miserably fails to justify the hopes centred in him. There may be various reasons for this, but as a rule there is only one. A wise athlete runs no unnecessary risks, he underestimates himself rather than otherwise. He is faithful in his daily exercises. He studies his weak points, and seeks to overcome them by diligent practice. On the day of the race he is cool and collected. His previous faithfulness is a guarantee of his being in good form. But while some men at the beginning of their career underestimate themselves, after a few easy wins the majority develop an unwarranted confidence. Samson-like they abuse their strength, and vainly argue that what they have done before, they can do again. They wist not that their strength is departed. It is a humiliating moment when a popular favourite becomes conscious that he has more than met his match, and as a result of his own folly is being outdis-

tanced in the race by a much inferior competitor. The excuses of loyal supporters only intensify the remorse of the man who is painfully aware that he is now a good "has-been," and that because of his own neglect.

This is a parable of the Children of Israel at the time of this prophecy. As a people they enjoyed the distinction of having been divinely ordained a nation. By signal acts God had identified Himself with His people. They had a unique history. They had won many laurels as the chosen athletes of God. Their uncompromising fidelity to truth and righteousness had given them prestige. God had put the fear of them into the hearts of all possible rivals. They enjoyed many exceeding great and precious promises. God had intimated that His athletes were to run to some purpose. "One would chase a thousand, and two would put ten thousand to flight." In their best days they figured in many thrilling events. As spiritual athletes they had broken the religious record. And brilliant as had been the achievements of the past, greater glories yet awaited them. But alas! They became careless and indifferent. They gradually neglected the steady practice of righteousness, and withal, regarded all possible rivals with haughty contempt. Amid present prosperity, they forgot their Trainer, and distinguished athletes became more of a memory than a reality. They were guilty of the common sin of presuming on their past. Consequently

they went down to defeat and shame

The prophecy beginning with the fortieth chapter of Isaiah was delivered to Israelitish captives in a strange land. They had miserably disappointed the high hopes entertained of them, and as they sat by the rivers of Babylon, they were painfully conscious that they were good "has-beens." Like the crestfallen ex-champion who has suffered defeat through folly, they hung their harps upon the willow trees.

But granting that an athlete has sinned against himself as Israel had sinned against God, if he be a true and worthy man he is not content to drift down to disgrace and ruin. He pulls himself together, faces the situation with candour, forsakes the evils which contributed to his defeat, and determines to transform present defeat into personal conquest and future glory. Perhaps there is nothing more pathetic and inspiring than to see a man, a good "has-been," trying to come back.

Israel in exile had leisure enough to think. They thought with pain of their past. They regretted their folly and into the sphere of their servitude came a man who reminded them of their glorious past, he also told them if they would they could come back. They looked at him with eyes which had gazed into the abyss of despair. They had a renowned history, but their national glory was gone. They were not equal to the demands made on their strength. The race

was so trying that even their youths were faint and weary, while some of their young men in endeavouring to gain the lead had fallen in their tracks. To those who once ran well, the prophet proclaimed the one sure method by which they could come back, and gain even greater distinction than they had enjoyed in the past. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

If we are at all acquainted with the needs of our own nature, we will not wish to tarry just now to discuss the question whether there was only one Isaiah or two. We will appreciate the significance of this prophecy, and feel deep down in our hearts, that Israel's history is our own. We will not discuss the question of how or when we entered the contest. Doubtless we all entered for the Christian race full of vigour and enthusiasm. We were determined to run straight, we were indifferent to the crowds, we had our eyes fixed upon the Leader and Crowner of the race, and, although we are loathe to confess it, we distinguished ourselves as we ran in the way of God's commandments. But, sad to relate, although we kept up great speed for a while, we gradually slackened our pace, and were guilty of something that no whole-hearted athlete is guilty of, we turned around to see how the other competitors were progressing, and when we saw so

many circumspect people walking leisurely behind, we thought we had been going too fast. Having taken our eye off the magnetic Leader, other objects began to attract our attention, and we lingered. Since then instead of running straight on, we have been running across the track, inspecting its borders, and sometimes wondering if it would not be easier to run with the multitude to do evil. We have got tangled up with the cares of this present world, and beyond an occasional sprint, we have not been getting up much speed lately. The race has been telling upon us. We are weak and languid and only an imitation of our former selves. We have been hopelessly outdistanced by those who ran straight on, without deviation to the right hand or to the left. To tell the truth, we are often tempted to give up, and although we mean to keep on, we are sadly conscious that we are capable of a better performance. What we need is the old incentive that we had at the beginning of our athletic career to urge us forward. We will find the true incentive to increased speed where we left it. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

Let us note carefully the instructions given, to see the requirements and possibilities of all Christian athletes. Everything hinges upon our attitude. Therefore let us learn what our attitude

should be. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." We are to "wait upon the Lord." We all know what it means to wait. Have we not occasionally made an appointment with a certain party, to meet at a given hour? We have gone to the place at the specified time, but the other party has not yet arrived. After an elapse of fifteen minutes, we begin to get restless, and should the other party put in an appearance an hour late we are simply furious, that is if we are still there. But the full meaning of waiting is by no means exhausted by the method which exhausts our patience. An athlete, who is expecting to compete in a great event, is not likely to be standing around waiting for something to turn up. Nor should idle and unprofitable waiting have any part in the program of those who wish to excel in the Christian contest. Let us revise our notions of waiting. It is possible to wait upon a person while he is engaged in conversation with us. This is always true of the Lord, He is always there and ready to be enquired of. By appointment we wait upon a lawyer for advice, or upon a doctor for medical attention. At a given time the athlete waits upon his trainer, to receive instruction and also to undergo strenuous practice. From the athlete we may learn some useful lessons. If he is preparing for an event which will decide the championship of the Dominion he is faithful and diligent. He takes nothing for granted. And we ought at

least to be as faithful and diligent as he: for we are preparing to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." To do this effectively our waiting upon God will need to be freed from the haphazard periods, the spasmodic efforts of the past. Faithfulness is more to be desired than genius. Let us cultivate the fine art of waiting. At a given hour every day, let us wait upon the Lord in prayer and meditation. Waiting upon the Lord is not enough if it be merely formal. As the most difficult feats of the athlete are performed in private, so must it be with us. We must strive to realize the presence of God and agonize until we renew our strength.

The athlete is able to appear to advantage in the contest, because he has been drilled and tested behind the scenes. This has been the unfailing method of the athletes of God. During the most trying and eventful periods of His earthly ministry, as others were retiring to sleep, our Lord would retire to a mountain, and spend the whole night in prayer. In the birth pangs of the Reformation, Luther said he had so much to do that he could never begin to accomplish it unless he spent three hours a day in prayer. Luther waited upon the Lord, and this was the secret of his strength, when on his way to Worms, to appear before the Roman Catholic tribunal. His timorous friends fearing foul play, sought to dissuade him. Luther replied to the effect, that if there were as many devils as there were

tiles on the housetops, en route, he would defy them all to go and answer the charges brought against him. No athlete of any consequence is always exhibiting his powers. He may practise three months for one race.

The most difficult lesson we have to learn is to wait. The trouble with too many of us is, that we are always on parade. Consequently our religion, instead of being rooted and grounded in love, by patient and persistent waiting upon God in faith and prayer, is quite superficial. The only claim some of us have to be Christian athletes is a form of godliness. We need more than the form, we need to receive such a steady influx of strength from God that we always may be assured of victory. Every man, who has done anything worth mentioning in the world, has conquered before the battle was fought, has won the race before it was run, and if we are to distinguish ourselves, as did Enoch and David and Paul, we must cultivate the art of waiting upon the Lord. Everything depends upon our attitude, for only those who wait upon the Lord renew their strength.

How sensible is the message of the prophet! Those who have a surface knowledge of religion tell you it is a fragile thing and its confessors weak. We have not so learned Christ. When the great evangelical prophet of the exile came to a people prostrated by weakness, he told them how they could receive strength, strength to run

the race God had set before them. Strength! Robust, manly strength is what we all require. St. Paul says, "Be ye strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." Martin Luther said, "God wants strong men and He cannot do without them."

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." There are various ways in which we may wait. Our waiting may be in some quiet retreat or in the midst of our daily task. Let us cultivate both methods: for only thus will our attitude be one of perpetual waiting. Let nothing interfere with your stated periods of devotion. Take time to meet with God in private, but do not rest content with these occasional interviews. It is your privilege to wait upon God by meditation as you are in the midst of your affairs. By all means cultivate this attitude by being responsive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and you will rejoice as a strong man to run a race.

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles." Here it is made plain, that our attitude determines the atmosphere we are to breathe. The strong wings and the penetrating eye of the eagle suggest the calm, clear, bracing atmosphere in which we are to move. The athlete lives in an atmosphere higher than the rabble. One of the first impressions we receive of a champion is that he is head and shoulders above his fel-

lows. He is in a class far above many of his enthusiastic supporters. Even though he might be given to habits of indulgence he cheerfully forgoes them, to give himself a chance. The athletes of God move in a higher atmosphere still. They are "in the world but not of it." They walk in the light as He is in the light. Here the atmosphere is clear, and we enjoy fellowship with the Father and with His son Jesus Christ. The altitude may be high but it is safe. It is a boon to be up here, for by faith we can see the hills of God, and the atmosphere is bracing. Up here in the clear, calm, bracing atmosphere of faith and prayer we can see the "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." It was in this glorious atmosphere that the stalwart athletes of old lived and moved and had their being. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Oh, you who are sitting in weariness, down in the valleys, come up here and fill your lungs with the fresh air of heaven. Those of us who are even slightly acquainted with the hill country of God, say with Peter, "Lord, it is good for us to be here."

Do you want to know how to get up? "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and

walk and not faint." If, as we have seen, our attitude determines the atmosphere we breathe, it also determines our ability. The two indispensable elements which determine the career of an athlete are energy and endurance, and these are promised to all Christian athletes.

In these days we hear a great deal about comparative religion. Certain individuals, in their ignorance, would like to impress upon us that the older religions are as good as Christianity. We joyfully recognize and appreciate all the good in these ancient religions. But when we begin to study them we get tired, and there is nothing in the dead religions of the past to arouse us from our spiritual inertia, and that is what the world out of Christ is dying of to-day. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. Christ is not a dead religious thinker, whose memory we revere. He is a living Person who in resurrection triumph, is teaching us how to distinguish ourselves upon the Christian course. He is setting the pace for us, and insists that we follow His steps. Christianity is more than a set of rules, it is a life. It is a race to be run, a conquest to be achieved. Of ourselves we are weak, in our own strength we cannot even figure in the race, but the strength which God supplies through His eternal Son gives us energy to run and not be weary. As Christian athletes, remember the race is not to the swift, but to those who continue to the end.

CHAPTER XI

A MORAL CRISIS

Behold this dreamer cometh.—Gen. XXXVII, 19.

THIS was an expression of contempt. It was born of envy. It was spoken in derision. It was meant to be a brand, it was worn as a laurel. It gives us an insight into the character of Jacob's sons. They were hard-headed, matter-of-fact men. They believed in wheat and sheep, but they had no use for dreams. They had all breathed the same atmosphere, for they were all the sons of Jacob. They all had the benefit of his training, yet they were as opposite as the poles. They lived in one world, Joseph in another. "Behold this dreamer cometh." Their designation of Joseph was calculated to hold him up to ridicule.

It is ever the way of the world. When we discover one of our associates taking exception to our moral discrepancies, and reminding us of our moral responsibilities, we christen him with some absurd name. He becomes the butt of our jests, and we sharpen our wits at his expense. We deride and pity him as we see him setting out on

his lonely way. Let a man live ever so little above the average, or act ever so little out of the ordinary, and he is labelled a dreamer or regarded as a madman. But a true man, no matter how much he is exposed to rancour and abuse, will survive the epithets of shame and transform the stigma into a badge of distinction.

The brethren of our Lord, instead of giving heed to His message, sought to lay hold of Him saying, "He is beside Himself." The scribes said, "He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth He out devils." The Pharisees sought to cover Him with ignominy by circulating the report, "He is the friend of publicans and sinners." "He receiveth sinners and eateth with them," is the distinctive glory of our blessed Lord. On more occasions than one, St. Paul was declared to be mad. To this charge he replied in those memorable words, "For whether we be beside ourselves it is to God, or whether we be sober it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us." The name which we bear as believers and which we associate with the highest dignity and glory was first given as a nickname by heathens. "The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch."

Although Joseph's brethren spoke disparagingly, they designated him truly, "Behold this dreamer cometh." "Behold this dreamer!" He is well worth looking at. The name with which he was labelled may suggest an aimless, shiftless

youth, unpractical and unprogressive, but such a conception is an injustice to Joseph. He was a combination of grace and power. He was cheerful and alert. He had a buoyancy of spirit and a tenacity of purpose which were crowned with an indestructible purity. He believed he had a part to play and resolved to fulfil his destiny. Therefore I ask you to, "Behold this dreamer." As we try to analyze his character we find him to be intensely spiritual. We readily think of a "master of dreams" having intercourse with the unseen. The dreamer believes that "the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

At a glance we notice the contrast between Joseph and his brethren. He aspired to heights of which they never dreamed. He was spiritual, they were carnal. They believed in God in a general way, but they had no place in their creed for the miraculous. Their religious privileges descended as a kind of heirloom, and the order was as fixed as fate. According to their notions, God worked along the lines of natural selection, and briefly stated, it meant that the eldest son would succeed his father as patriarch. In the divine economy the first-born always has been honoured, but the first-born have not always appreciated the honour. Esau-like they have despised their birthright and from the natural heir God often had to turn to seek a man after His own heart. Whenever God has interfered with

natural selection His interference has been amply vindicated.

Natural selection is very pronounced in human nature. Isaac was determined to bless Esau despite the fact that God had said, "The elder shall serve the younger." When Samuel came to anoint the future king of Israel, Jesse naturally introduced the first-born; and so sure was he that this time-honoured custom would be respected that he neglected to send word to the ruddy lad who was out in the field tending the sheep. There is a natural selection and there is a spiritual selection. The eldest son naturally succeeds his father, irrespective of his moral standing, but when God chooses a man to do a great work, He does not consult the family register, He consults the human heart. God's choice of Joseph instead of Reuben has never been challenged. Whatever monopolies flourish in the world there is no monopoly of virtue. It matters not whether we are the first-born or the second-born; whether we are in the so-called patriarchal line, or the so-called apostolic succession, we are all blessed with a capacity for God.

The difference between Joseph and his brethren is not to be explained by his genius and their deficiency, but in their deliberate choice. Joseph turned to God as the flower turns to the sun, his brethren turned to secular interests as the miser to his gold. What is occupying our attention?

It is imperative for us to realise the tremendous

issues that will be decided by our youthful decision. One thing is certain, you cannot reject and have. Therefore, beware of making the fatal mistake of throwing overboard the three graces, *i.e.*, faith, and hope, and love.

Joseph lived in close communion with God. God's will was the law of his life. He knew right from wrong and he adhered steadily to the right without deviation to the right hand or the left. The charm of his transparent life has been an inspiration to every successive lover of purity, and home, and God.

Another outstanding feature in Joseph's character was his patience. We can appreciate what kind of life he would have among his brethren after he, in his innocence, had told them his dreams. We can hear their rude laughter at his expense, as they jeer and taunt him about his dreams. We can see how their banter turns to hate until they deliberately contemplate murder. We cannot imagine Joseph's ever being made much of by his rude and envious brothers, but this we can gather from his history, he was patient. Patience is a virtue which is not cultivated in a night. It is of slow growth and only blooms in the atmosphere of genial submission to the will of God. When his brethren plagued and abused him, Joseph did not let his temper run away with him and disgrace himself to the delight of his tormentors. No! He felt sorry for them because they had no more sense. He knew they did not

believe in his dreams, but he believed in them, and was prepared to wait. He believed in himself; he believed in God, and he believed in the future.

He was blessed with a cheerful disposition. He had a great many disagreeable experiences, but he had the happy art of seeing God in his afflictions, and although he suffered a great deal, he never murmured. He was a most agreeable companion whether in foreign service or in an Egyptian dungeon. "The Lord was with Joseph." This observation was made of him when he was in prison.

The trouble with too many of us is that our religion does not admit of an occasional rainy day, or of a storm; we insist on having a cloudless sky. When the clouds gather and the lightnings flash we begin to think that all is lost. Instead of fretting, let us be submissive and patient, believing that our Father is with us whether we happen to be thrown into the prison of sorrow or adversity. Let us dare to believe, not merely that some things, but that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

Another important feature in the character of Joseph was his industry. He was a serious student. He knew the history of his people, he saw God had a purpose in their history, and the more he meditated the more he became convinced that God had a purpose in his life, and he determined by faithful application to be ready for all His perfect will. Thus, instead of being an indolent

star-gazer, he was enterprising and aggressive. He could prepare for future usefulness only by the most assiduous application. He performed the most menial task with as much thoroughness as he exhibited later in his Egyptian administration. When his father sent him to Shechem to see how his brothers and the flocks fared he went to the place. They were nowhere to be seen, and had he been of a careless, indolent disposition, he would have returned home with this intelligence, much to the annoyance of his father. But such a thought, as that of returning before he had discharged his duty faithfully, never crossed his mind. After satisfying himself that his brethren had left Shechem, he wandered about in the hope of finding them, until he met a man who casually had overheard them say, "Let us go to Dothan." So to Dothan he directed his steps little thinking how fraught with destiny his humble errand was. As he drew near, his brethren said one to another, "Behold, this dreamer cometh."

Behold the Advent of the Dreamer! It is an epoch-making event when the dreamer appears above the horizon. The world can never be the same again after the dreamer has come. Time would fail to tell of a tithe of the immortal dreamers that have lived to bless the world. We will have to be content with noting a few at random. James Watt dreamed of the possibility of utilizing steam-power and his dream is the abiding miracle of the commercial world.

George Stephenson dreamed of the possibility of travelling by a faster method than was possible with a coach and four. Fulton, the inventor of the steamship, dreamed of the possibility of international commerce and on his death-bed he said, "Bury me beside the waters of the Ohio; that I may hear in times to come the paddle wheels of the ships as they pass, bearing their commerce from land to land." Can the world ever be the same again after the advent of such dreamers as Robert Burns? Sir Walter Scott? Tennyson? Wordsworth? Longfellow? Thackeray? Dickens? or Shakespeare?

"The poem hangs on the berry bush,
Till comes the poet's eye,
And the whole street is a masquerade,
When Shakespeare passes by."

Sir Humphry Davy dreamed of safety lamps for the toiling millions in the mines. Lord Lister dreamed of painless surgery, and Pierpont Langley dreamed of the conquest of the air.

These dreams have come true, but the most daring dream of all was dreamed by a young man in Galilee. He dreamed of a new world, wherein would dwell righteousness, and what is more, His dream is coming true. To-day, millions of the best blood of every land are prepared to die rather than deny His name. What are you dreaming about? Are you dreaming of great

things for yourself? Dream them not. Are you dreaming of what you can do for your fellows? Are you dreaming of the Christian conquest of the world? Then dream on! Believe in your dreams! Act on your dreams! They are coming true, "for the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Behold the Reception of the Dreamer! Joseph's reception by his brethren is one of the many crises every man of worth must be prepared to meet. The story of what they deliberately contemplated and what they eventually did is one of the most heartrending in literature, and the pity is, it is not confined to literature, it is enacted in everyday life. You say you are not appreciated, your good is evil spoken of, reflection cast on your purest motives, your ideals laughed to scorn! You are not alone. A similar experience to yours has been the lot of every noble soul that has trod the highway of God. Think it not strange if you are persistently misunderstood and misrepresented. Make sure that your dreams merit the approval of God and of time. Be content to live as a hero

and die as a martyr in a worthy cause. The eternal decree has gone forth: "No cross, no crown." The path of duty may lead you to the pit; to servitude, and the dungeon, but beyond these lies a blissful immortality. Galileo, the astronomer, who made one of the greatest discoveries ever made by man, was condemned to banishment, and his books burned. Socrates was poisoned for no worse sin than that of living in advance of his age. The Lord Christ was betrayed and crucified. Many more of whom the world was not worthy have shared a similar fate, and still the work of rejection and crucifixion goes on. If you are going to wait until you are fully appreciated you will accomplish nothing and die "unwept, unhonoured and unsung."

Behold the Conduct of the Dreamer! Joseph's conduct will bear the most searching examination. His behaviour in his first and unexpected trial was prophetic of one of the greatest moral conquests ever achieved by man. With what unerring precision one thing leads to and depends upon another in the moral world. To this youth of seventeen years, life had assumed a great seriousness, hence he was never taken at a disadvantage. Had Joseph been unable to govern his temper at seventeen he would have been unable to govern his passions in the great crisis of his life. But instead of displaying hatred and pouring forth a volume of abuse upon his brethren for their outrageous treatment of him, he im-

plored them with cries and tears to consider the nature of their deed, but all to no avail! "They sat down to eat and drink but were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." The cold-blooded act of his brethren in bargaining with the Midianites and selling Joseph into Egyptian slavery is only equalled by the deed of one, whose "name is a byword to the human race," and who sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver.

But although Joseph's body became the property of a slave-owner, his soul was free. He recognized that he was still the captain of his soul, and instead of giving way to fits of depression he saw that he was being deliberately taken along a hard road. He believed that his God was the God of Egypt as well as the God of his fathers, that His control was absolute, that His all-seeing eye was upon him, and he took courage. He made the best of his adverse circumstances and when he became the property of the captain of Pharaoh's guard he acquitted himself with such credit, his character was so noble and his conduct so admirable, that Potipher saw that the Lord was with him, and "made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand."

It was while engaged as an overseer that Joseph was called upon to face the most fearful temptation of his life. Potipher's wife, captivated by the charm of his personality, became his temptress. From day to day she spake to Joseph

tempting him and had it not been for his habits of industry and piety, his practice of the presence of God in his daily life, he would have gone down into defeat and oblivion. But his faith saved him. His faith gave him a high sense of honour and a worthy fear of God. He was true to himself, and even though it meant being branded with shame, and cast into prison, he could not be untrue to himself, he could not be untrue to his master, and, moreover, he could not be untrue to his God. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" If Joseph's behaviour was commendable in his first trial, his behaviour in the great moral crisis of his life was admirable. His faith had given him great convictions and his convictions determined his conduct. Needless to remark his conduct on that momentous occasion decided his destiny. By circumstantial evidence he was condemned to imprisonment; but his innocence was attested by God, by his own conscience, and by time. He might have cleared himself of this criminal charge, but a word from him would dishonour his master, so he preferred to suffer in silence, and leave himself and his future in God's hands.

His conduct in prison won the approval of all within its walls, but his treatment of his brethren, his bestowal of generous measures of mercy, instead of seeking revenge is beyond all praise.

Therefore, Behold the Conquests of this Dreamer! They are many and we can indicate

only a few. Behold the conquests of this dreamer in the commercial realm. He knows every grade of wheat and he appreciates the value of the flocks. Had it not been for this dreamer who acted with such discretion during the seven years of plenty, man would have starved and the flocks perished during the seven years of famine. We need dreamers in the commercial realm to-day, men who by their ability will prove their fitness to be commercial leaders and who by their uncompromising integrity will redeem modern business life from all suspicion, and conduct it along such lines that every honest business man will be proud of his calling.

Behold the conquests of this dreamer in the moral realm. At last Joseph's dreams come true. He has been raised to the high eminence of Prime Minister of Egypt. He has saved the situation for that great empire; and one day a procession of ten men appears. They have come to buy corn. Joseph recognizes them; tries them, reveals himself to them, forgives them, and invites them to come and dwell in the land of Goshen.

The meeting of Joseph and his brethren, after twenty years, is full of pathos. These rough men have learned many things in the meantime, and gladly prostrate themselves before their brother. His generous treatment of them reminds us of One who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; and who, on a hill called Calvary prayed for His murderers, "Father forgive them for they know

not what they do."

Behold the conquests of this dreamer in the spiritual realm. Although exalted by Pharaoh and crowned with every symbol of authority, he recognized it was the Lord. To his brethren he confessed, it was the Lord. And while his achievements were great and enduring, the most enduring monument of all is himself. He stands before us as a worthy type of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XII

A DOMESTIC CRISIS

At even my wife died: and I did in the morning as I was commanded.—Ezek. XXIV, 18.

THESE words are startling in their significance. They bring us face to face with one of the most harrowing experiences of domestic life. We see a man in the midst of a great sorrow. The hand of the Lord has been heavy upon him. His wife has been taken away by a sudden stroke. In graphic language he narrates his experience. “In the evening my wife died.” It is always evening when a good woman dies. We have a custom of drawing the curtains when death visits our homes. I do not know what led to the introduction of this custom unless it was that the chamber of death might appear to be more in harmony with the soul of the bereaved. There he stands in the gathering gloom: a man who has been bereft of “the delight of his eyes.” Impulsively we sympathize with him. Nothing crushes a man’s spirit so entirely as a great domestic tragedy. This man has lost his wife. Death has entered the inner sanctuary of life and robbed him

of his most valuable domestic asset. The bond which bound "this man and this woman" together, at the altar, has been severed. Half stunned with grief, and, let us hope, through the salvation of blinding tears, he looks upon the mortal remains of her who, to him, was dearer than life. He is alone, and the power of the night chills his spirit. We have no words but those of kindly consideration and pity for the man who is crushed and broken by such a desolating experience.

But as we gaze upon this sorrowful scene we are impressed by something unusual. This man has triumphed over his sorrow; or at least he bears himself so bravely, in his domestic crisis, that we wish to become more fully acquainted with him. "In the evening my wife died: and in the morning I did as I was commanded." Who was this remarkable man? Ezekiel, the prophet. As a prophet, Ezekiel has not yet come to his own. The majority of Bible students have not cultivated his acquaintance. His method of prophetic utterance is somewhat exacting, so instead of facing his wonderful array of images, comparisons, allegories, parables, personifications and descriptions, we have regarded him with something akin to indifference. It has been argued that in Ezekiel there are many things hard to understand. Perhaps so, but whatever may be said in favour of such an argument, there is one thing we can understand. It is the great sorrow which came upon him like a bolt from the blue.

"In the evening my wife died: and in the morning I did as I was commanded."

Ezekiel lived during the decline and fall of Israel as a nation. The clouds of doom were moving across the horizon when he was born. His father's name was Buzi. Of his youth and education we know nothing beyond what is implied in his prophecies, that he was naturally endowed with great intellectual strength, and had received more than an ordinary education. Presumably he belonged to the upper ranks of the priesthood, who formed part of the aristocracy of Jerusalem. His intimate knowledge of the details of the temple service gives one the impression that he must have been an officiating priest in the national sanctuary. He was contemporary with Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, and with Daniel, the beloved. He is known to us as a prophet of the Exile. He, with many others of the cream of Jewish society, was carried away from his native land in the second deportation adopted by Nebuchadnezzar.

The colony in which Ezekiel settled was in the northern part of Mesopotamia, on the banks of the Chebar. The Chebar, if not the name of an arm of the Euphrates itself, was probably one of the numerous irrigating canals which intersected the great alluvial plain of the Euphrates and Tigris. In this settlement the prophet had his own house where the people were free to visit him. It was on the banks of the Chebar that

God's message came to Ezekiel calling him to the ministry of a prophet. The call came to him in the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. With the simplicity of a child and the earnestness of a man, he did what he was bidden.¹ His readiness to comply with the divine will at any cost is seen in the words of our text, "In the evening my wife died: and in the morning I did as I was commanded."

Ezekiel stands before us as a man who loved, as a man who suffered, and as a man who served. He was a man who loved. What was the object of his love? One thing is very evident, he loved his nation. Ezekiel was a patriot of the worthiest kind. His acceptance of the prophetic office proves that he loved his nation. He had his nation's highest interests at heart. He had a great regard for civic righteousness. He loved the society into which he had been thrown by deportation. His fellow-exiles felt that in him they had a friend. His regard for them is seen in his having an open door for all and sundry. But while he had a great regard for his nation and a general love for his friends in Chebar, he had a particular love for one woman. The object of Ezekiel's love was his wife. This fact gives reality to the sorrow he relates. If little is known about Ezekiel's personal history, still less is known regarding his wife. However, we are informed that she died suddenly. We do not know her

¹ The Expositors' Bible.

name and nothing is recorded of her family history. But this we do know: she was greatly beloved by her husband. She is spoken of as "the delight of his eyes." From this we reasonably may infer that she was a good woman. Like draws to like. Considering the character of the prophet, only a good woman would be able to gain his affections and command his respect. The maidens of Israel were young women of sterling piety. Consequently the mothers in Israel have impressed the world. The one reference which has come down to us respecting Ezekiel's wife enables us to see that he was very happy in his marriage. His home life was all that could be desired. He loved!

This is an experience so common that we are apt to regard it with indifference. But although such a frequent occurrence, it comes like the dawning of a new day to every individual lover. He becomes a veritable Columbus; he discovers a new world, a world which makes the discovery of a continent a prosaic affair. All the world loves a lover! Jacob has an abiding place in our affections because he loved. He hesitated not to serve fourteen years to gain the object of his affections. Jonathan never wore the crown of Israel, but his love for David has given him a crown that fadeth not away. Robert Burns achieved immortality because he loved. He loved nature and he loved men. His lament for Highland Mary never fails to strike a responsive chord:

"Ye'll break my heart, ye warbling bird,
That warbles on the flow'ry thorn,
Ye mind me o' departed joys,
Departed never to return."

That Thomas Carlyle was a lover of literature none will deny, but he appears in no more favourable light than when we see him wending his way so frequently to visit his deceased wife's grave.

What is the object of our love? Is it national, social, or individual? Are we fired by great patriotic sentiments? Have we a consuming ambition to affect great moral and social reforms? Or is it your desire to be used of God? To lead men to Christ one by one? Whether we wish to be recognized as patriots, as social reformers or evangelists there is one essential preliminary. Before our love can be a social force it must be kindled by our regard for a particular individual. Next to the love he bore to his Creator and Redeemer, Ezekiel could not have bestowed his affections on a more worthy object.

"Without faith it is impossible to please God." Without love it is impossible to achieve anything of worth. Bring me a boy who is in love with his school work, who is busy with his books when he might be at play, and I will show you a coming scholar or a future statesman. Bring me the boy who studies his Bible and his geography together and I will show you a future Livingstone. Every

man of worth is deeply in love. He must needs love the work in which he is engaged if he would command success. A man cannot preach a good sermon without being in love. The greater his love for his Lord, the greater his love for the Lord's people, the better will he preach. The greatest saints have been the greatest lovers. And one thing is very patent in the New Testament. It is this: You cannot have salvation unless you fall in love. To Peter the Apostle, Jesus said not, "Canst thou preach?" not, "Canst thou organize," but, "Lovest thou Me?" Love is the fundamental requirement. John was a great lover. He also leaned on Jesus' bosom. Therefore he saw most clearly into the divine heart. Judas ceased to love, and after perpetrating the most diabolical deed on record he went "to his own place"—a place where there is no love.

Before passing from this part of our subject observe the source of Ezekiel's love. When we see a mighty river rushing on to the ocean, we know it has a source. When we see an all-controlling current in a man's nature, we rightly consider that it has a source. It needs no student of philosophy to discern two kinds of love. One is selfish, the other is unselfish. There is a "love of the world," and there is the "love of God." One is an animal passion; the other is a Christian grace. Behind Ezekiel's love for the gentle creature who was "the delight of his eyes," behind his love for Zion, behind his love for his fellow exiles,

there was the love of God. His love emanated from God. It was the mighty and merciful Jehovah who gave Ezekiel such a strong, clean, wholesome regard for his people, and such a tender regard for his wife.

We joyfully confess that we love God, but have we ever grasped the significance of its source? Our love has its source in the great and gracious heart of the Eternal. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." There is one hymn, among others, which has simply captivated us. It proclaims a thrilling fact, and so we delight to sing,

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly."

"We love Him because He first loved us, and gave Himself for us."

Ezekiel was a man who loved. He was also a man who suffered. "In the evening my wife died: and in the morning I did as I was commanded." Consider the nature of his sufferings. We are not in a position to say by what disease Ezekiel's wife was carried away. Doubtless it would entail great physical suffering. There are a great many of this kind of sufferers. It must by trying always to be ailing, to be confined to one's room for weeks, and possibly years, by physical sufferings. Those of us who enjoy good

health should at least be grateful and furthermore we should take reasonable care of it, for it is one of those priceless boons we value most when beyond recall.

But exacting as physical suffering is there is another kind which is even worse. It is mental suffering. This was the nature of Ezekiel's sufferings. To appreciate the gravity of his experience one needs to have been in a similar position. If you have watched over your loved ones as they faded from health to weakness, if you have seen them becoming a little more frail until one never to be forgotten night when the end came—if you have had an experience of this nature—you will be able to sympathize with Ezekiel as he passes through his great domestic crisis. As the dimensions of his sorrow break in upon us, we begin to compute the measure of his suspense, his anxiety, his inward struggle to become reconciled to his fate. The appalling nature of suspense, the fearful uncertainty, the struggle of hope with despair, must be experienced to be known.

As we contemplate Ezekiel's mental agony, we see that his suffering was intensified by the suddenness of the stroke. "In the morning I spake unto the people, and at even my wife died." The sorrow of bereavement is invariably great, but it is simply overwhelming when it finds us unprepared for its approach. The blow is somewhat relieved of its severity when we are looking for it. There is a better chance of our becoming

reconciled to it than when we are taken unawares. Ezekiel's suffering is by no means an unusual experience. As we consider the loss he sustained, we are the better able to view our own. How many domestic relations have been disturbed, and severed in the present crisis! Our brave brothers and sons, so recently departed, had one thing in common, they loved. They loved the great and glorious nation of which we form a part, and how dearly they loved their homes! They have gone!—gone! not because they loved us the less, but because they loved honour more. They responded to the call of their King and Country. They have gone to fight, to suffer, and if need be to die for Truth, and Home, and God. To go to the front is no child's play. The call has been for men, and only the most physically fit have been privileged to go. All honour to the men who have gone! They cheerfully gave up the companionship of those they loved dearer than life, at the call of Duty, and their sacrifice is great. But if I understand this fearful situation aright, the greatest valour is not confined to the trenches. The most strenuous demands have been made upon those who are left behind, who gaze upon a vacant chair, who anxiously wait and fervently pray. All honour to the noble mothers and wives and sweethearts who have given their dear ones freely at a time like this! Our suffering is too apparent to admit of our enlarging upon it. But this can be said, our own domestic sor-

rows help us to sympathize with the prophet who was suddenly bereft of "the delight of his eyes."

He suffered! How much God only knows! But observe his refuge in the midst of his suffering! Some men in the anguish of desolation have rebelled. When they have lost their loved ones they have lost their God. Far be it from us to criticize. It is an event devoutly to be deplored when a man loses faith, but this was not the case with the prophet. Even in his grief he held on to his God. He saw the hand of God in his affliction and that saved the situation. If we can realize in the present crisis that God is still on His throne, if we view our sorrow in the light of His gracious designs, our affliction will be sanctified to us. And when He has tried us we too, like Job, shall come forth as gold. God told Ezekiel that he would take away "the delight of his eyes" at a stroke. Such an intimation might have prostrated the strongest of men, but when the prophet was informed of the significance of this stroke, he humbly acquiesced.

This life is not all. And the great question after all is this: Whom are we living for? What are we desirous of accomplishing? This is not our abiding place. We seek "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." It is an enviable thing to have an honoured part in building the Empire of Righteousness. We grieve when our loved ones depart, but we sorrow not as those without hope. If by faith we can

become reconciled to our lot, we eventually shall see that "all things work together for good to them that love God." There is another life which many of our loved ones have gone to re-enforce. "The Lord is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble."

"In the evening my wife died: and in the morning I did as I was commanded." Ezekiel was a man who served. God teaches men by the means at His disposal. Some worthy souls are alert enough to hear the still small voice, but the majority of us are so preoccupied that we can be brought to attention only by the roar of cannon. It was a critical time in Jewish history. God wanted to give His people an idea of the dire calamities which were soon to overtake them. So he said to Ezekiel, "Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke," and thou shalt omit the usual signs of mourning. This will impress the people. They will ask the significance of thy strange behaviour and thou shalt inform them of the consequences of their sin. "Ye shall not mourn nor weep; but ye shall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one toward another." So this is recorded, "In the evening my wife died: and in the morning I did as I was commanded."

You can see him on that never to be forgotten night as he paces to and fro. He is passing through his Gethsemane. You can imagine his condition, but do you see him next morning? He

has had no sleep. He wants no breakfast. His eyes are red with weeping. His heart is heavy, his gait uncertain, but thank God he went forth. "In the morning I did as I was commanded." He served the same God after that eventful night, but with a new vision. No man can pass through such an experience and ever be the same again. Lo! the prophet has a new message. He prophesies the rise of "a new Israel out of the ruins of the old."¹ He merged his grief in public duty. If men disregarded his words they were impressed by his conduct. He stood for a sign and so does every man who names the name of Christ. It is our privilege to make men feel the power of the world to come. What is to be the outcome of the present crisis? If we have been favoured by a new vision, we will see a new world wherein righteousness shall dwell; we will see that there is another King who is coming to His own.

Ezekiel's labours were well rewarded. The people had been carried into exile because of idolatry and its attendant evils. When they returned they were cleansed from idolatry, and this was largely due to Ezekiel's labours. He lived to see a decided improvement in the character of the people among whom he laboured and perhaps the greatest impression was made upon them by his courageous example in the great domestic crisis of his life. "In the evening my wife died: and in the morning I did as I was commanded."

¹ Fairweather, *The Exile to the Advent*.

His service was immediate and it was attended by gratifying results. "In the morning I did as I was commanded." He was prompt. He began well. May we realize how urgent the command is! The King's business requires haste. With this heroic example before us let us make our domestic sorrows an incentive to renewed zeal, and a more Christlike devotion in His service.

CHAPTER XIII

A SPIRITUAL CRISIS

And He said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me.—Gen. XXII, 12.

A STORY is told in political circles of two men who were nominated by their respective friends to represent a certain constituency. The gentleman who advocated the claims of the first nominee spoke at some length upon his splendid qualifications. He made a very favourable impression when he reiterated the fact that the gentleman, whom he had the honour of nominating as a suitable candidate to represent the constituency, was a "self-made" man.

The next speaker made a very short but effective speech. He said, "The gentleman to whom we have just listened tried to make an essential qualification out of the fact that his nominee is a 'self-made' man. Evidently he is a 'self-made' man, but the candidate whom it is my privilege to nominate was made by God, and there is just as much difference between the two men as there is between the two makers."

In the political arena men make startling statements, and once in a while they speak truer than they know. There are two distinct types of character in the world. The one is self-made, the other is God-made, and the difference between them is simply the difference between the two makers. There are a great many attractive traits in the character of the self-made man. He is diligent, enterprising, and aggressive, but so is the devil. What determines the real status of one whom we designate a self-made man is not his wealth but his spirit. By what motives has he been actuated? What has been the dominating thought in his career? By a self-made man we generally mean one who in spite of obstacles, in spite of poverty and a limited education, by sheer pluck and perseverance has made his way in the world. A self-made man may in the truest sense of that term be a God-made man. He may be a son of God and a big brother to his fellows. But that a man makes his own way in the world and does the best for himself, it does not necessarily follow that he will do the most for his fellows. Everything depends on where a man's affections are placed.

We read of a self-made man in the New Testament. He was a wealthy farmer. So heavy were his crops one season that he was at a loss what to do with them. "And he thought within himself, saying, . . . This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow

all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." That's the kind of man self makes! Self first, capital "I" in the middle, and self last. "But God said unto him, Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Where self rules principles are enslaved. Take two men similar in mental caliber, with precisely the same advantages. The self-made man succeeds by leaps and bounds. The God-made man does not become renowned for his material prosperity. Why? Because he disdains to be unscrupulous! He prefers poverty with honour rather than riches with contempt.

We have heard a great deal in recent years about a certain self-made man who has been distinguished by the name of "superman." He is the product of social evolution. His chief attribute is the exercise of ruthless power, and as far as I can learn from his methods and motives he has been mis-named. When he says, "War is not merely a necessary element in the life of nations, but an indispensable factor of kultur," he is qualifying for honours in the cabinet of his Satanic majesty. In its ultimate issue, the self-made man is a Napoleon, the embodiment of selfishness, a Kaiser, the embodiment of vanity,

a Judas, the embodiment of treachery, or a military despot who is the embodiment of all three.

To obtain the highest type of manhood, self must be subordinated to a higher power. The self-made man is distinguished by a philosophy of blood and iron, by what he has accumulated, by the things he has gathered around him. The God-made man is distinguished by his sacrifices, by what he has suffered, by what he has given to the world.

Therefore I ask you to behold a man among men! A man, boasting many distinctions and sublime achievements, but his greatest distinction lies in the fact that he was made according to the divine pattern. In Abraham we have a concrete illustration of how God makes His men. In order to appreciate the divine method of education it will be necessary for us to refer to some of the outstanding events in his career. His career is worthy of study because it is so representative of that type of character which is as opposite as the poles to that of the self-made man. Our text introduces us to the supreme sacrifice of his life. This great spiritual crisis was the final examination in his moral and spiritual education. "And He said, lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me." These significant words, "Now I know," give the key to Abraham's eventful life. They carry us back to

the beginning of his pilgrimage.

His wonderful career began in obedience to

A DIVINE CALL

"The Lord said unto Abram, 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee.'" This call came to Abram in Haran and his immediate response to it showed him to be the kind of material out of which God's men are made. It was a drastic measure, to ask a man to leave his home, his friends, and his gods, but only drastic measures will justify the attempt to make a new man. Some men with the best of intentions begin a reform in Haran. They paint their house, they clean up all refuse, and give their home an attractive appearance. They begin to lecture their frivolous friends and even whitewash their heathen gods, but to every would-be Abram, God comes and says, "Get thee out!"

It requires no small moral effort for a man, in obedience to an unseen God, to leave all that Abram was requested to leave, but he did it and history shows that he made no mistake. Doubtless Abram had a great regard for his home and friends, although he was positively disgusted with idolatry, and when God called he "obeyed; and went out, not knowing whither he went." It was an act of simple faith. The only true and living God had called him, He knew

where He wanted Abram to go, and would show him the way.

The same God is calling to-day. Have you heard His call? Surely you are not so unreasonable as to imagine that you never have heard a call! A deaf man may stand among the trees where the birds are making melody and never hear a note, but it is altogether unreasonable to talk of never hearing a call when so many voices, so urgent and insistent, are endeavouring to attract our attention.

The God-made man is not the only man who hears a call. No man is more responsive to a call than a self-made man. But whereas the self-made man hears the call of ambition, of wealth, and pleasure or fame, the God-made man hears a divine call; he is always responsive to the divine voice. Nor is the God-made man the only man who leaves his country in obedience to a call. Thousands of self-made men have heard the call of wealth, under their own vine and fig tree. They have gone far beyond the comforts of civilization, they have faced hardships and solitude with a cheerfulness that was contagious, but with all their commendable features they were seeking great things for themselves. Thousands have crossed the ocean to make their homes on this great continent. The majority can easily boast a more delightful voyage than was experienced by the Pilgrim Fathers on board the *Mayflower*, but few can boast of coming to our shores in re-

sponse to a diviner call. The many calls we hear may be resolved into calls to please self, or to please God. Self calls and God calls. Each promises to make our hearty response pre-eminently worth while, and there is just as much difference between the respective promises and rewards as there is between the two promise makers. Two men go to Africa, each in response to a call. One hears an insistent call to the diamond mines of Kimberley; the other hears an urgent call to go and preach to the heathen, to civilize and evangelize Africa's dark and benighted sons. Both work hard. One eventually becomes a millionaire, the other a Livingstone.

The career of every God-made man begins, like that of Abram, with a divine call, and, like Abram, he becomes the recipient of

A DIVINE PROMISE

The divine promise to Abram was verified by his changed name. God appeared to him and said, "I am the Almighty God: walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will . . . multiply thee exceedingly, . . . and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram; but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee." The son of promise was born, the son in whom the hopes of Abraham were centred. Do you know what the advent of a child means

to his devoted parents? A man has a truer conception of the Fatherhood of God when he looks into the eyes of a child of his own. And if the advent of a child is so significant, what shall we say of a son of promise? Gaze upon these old people as they renew their youth in the presence of this child of promise.

Ah, no! the self-made men do not shine here. To prattle to a little child is so much waste of time. Time is money, and where self rules everything becomes as hard and unresponsive as gold. If we were as interested in our children as we are in our livestock, or our seed grain, there would be an improvement in our educational methods and standards of efficiency. When children could be sold for so much hard cash, even slave-owners could be generous and humane. When! oh when will we learn the priceless value of the souls committed to our care?

We can see joy and gladness on the faces of his aged parents as Isaac blooms into the beauty of youth and vigour. How much depends upon him! How essential that he be instructed in righteousness, that he become a partaker of his father's faith. By this time Abraham was considered a wealthy man. He had been successful in the great world of affairs, and what was more, his heart's desire had been granted. The divine promise was personified in his son.

We now begin to see how high the God-made man towers above the men self makes. Self

makes promises, but what are they in comparison to the promises of God? Self promises ease, pleasure, a comfortable old age, but "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

As Isaac developed into manhood, and began to assume responsibility, Abraham felt relieved. Now he could enjoy a well-earned rest, and pass the remainder of his life in peace and comfort. When lo! a storm broke out of a clear sky. All his plans and purposes seemed to be demolished suddenly, as by a cyclone. Like every God-made man Abraham was subjected to

A DIVINE TEST

"And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham, and said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." If it was a drastic measure to ask Abraham to leave everything and get out of his country, it was a mere suggestion of what was to follow. This latter injunction was the most drastic of all. To ask a man, venerable with age, by one fearful stroke to slay his son, to put the knife to his hopes, was a terrible demand to make.

Why did God tempt Abraham? Various re-

plies might be given. One is that this is not an isolated experience. How many parents have as generously given up their sons in the present crisis! How many wives have as courageously given up their husbands! How proudly and cheerfully our brothers and sons marched away, and some of them will not come back. We turn to the casualty list and read of a young man "killed in action." We put down the paper with a sigh of relief, saying, Only one in that list tonight. Yes! Only one! There would in all probability be many more. But supposing that "one" had been your son or mine? The sad news of that "one" breaks a mother's heart, and leaves another vacant chair. How many prayers were offered for that "one"! How many fond hopes were centred in him! Alas! How many parents and widows are now passing through a great spiritual crisis, as a result of their loss! Abraham, in being asked to take his son, does not have to walk to Mount Moriah alone.

But why did God tempt Abraham? Another answer is that nothing reveals character so clearly as a crisis. This Great War has revealed both men and nations in their true light. In a very striking manner it has parted the sheep on the right hand, and the goats on the left. King Albert of Belgium by his resolute stand for righteousness has covered himself with glory. His Christlike example will be an inspiration to future generations. King Ferdinand of Bulgaria showed his

true colours when he intimated that he must be on the winning side.

The great gulf separating the self-made men from the God-made men is seen in the attitude adopted in the present crisis. When the urgent call was made for men, not merely to uphold the traditions of the Empire, but to defend the liberties of the race, thousands of loyal citizens said to themselves, "This is a great crisis. What can I put into it?" What the God-made men and women have put into this struggle, is seen in the generous response of those who have offered themselves for service, in the Christ-like efforts of the Red Cross Society, in the Patriotic Fund, in the various relief funds, and in the sympathy and prayers that daily ascend to God that He will overrule all for righteousness, and the advancement of His kingdom.

But there were others who said, "This is a great opportunity for enrichment. What can I get out of it?" And while their brothers' blood is being shed for freedom, home, and God, they are exploiting their king and country.

Why did God tempt Abraham? He did not tempt him with the idea of causing him to sin. He never does that. Rather, it was the final examination in his moral and spiritual education, and God believed that Abraham was ready for such an examination. It is always an honour to be asked to take this examination. For "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth

every son whom He receiveth." "God did tempt Abraham." The word translated "tempt" in the A. V. means to prove or to test. God did prove Abraham, or subjected him to a divine test. In one of the old versions, which is distinguished by its elegant Greek, there is an interesting paraphrase upon this passage. It reads: "God glorified Abraham." What a delightful explanation of this divine test, and how true in the light of Abraham's subsequent immortality!

We look upon such a divine test with fear and trembling. But what makes the precious gold of Christian character? Is it ease? comfort? or sacrifice? Who are those who have impressed you most? Those who have suffered. What does a true man desire more than an opportunity to prove his loyalty, to prove his spurs, to show himself equal to the demands made upon him. So in setting these final examination papers before His servant, "God glorified Abraham." The process of glorification is not an easy one. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

When Abraham was subjected to this divine test he was in a similar position to all who are confronted with a spiritual crisis. He did not know what was going to happen. He had no assurance that his son was going to be given back to him. All he knew was that God had said,

"Take now thy son," and in obedience to the divine command, he directed his steps to Mount Moriah.

But were there no questionings in Abraham's heart? Put yourself in his place. Mark you, he did not think it was wrong to offer his son as a burnt-offering, for such horrible practices obtained in his time. But he must have thought it strange for he lived far above his time. He had a father's heart, he had a living faith, and that three eventful days' journey would rend his spirit. He could not fathom why God wanted to punish him in this manner, but he knew that God knew him better than he knew himself, and he went on. Imagine his feelings when the unsuspecting Isaac said, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb?" That innocent question would be like plunging a dagger in his heart, "Where is the lamb?" Abraham spake better than he knew when he replied, "God will provide Himself a lamb." At that moment God was giving Abraham a taste of His own experience, a knowledge of the mystery "of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

We do not always know why we have to pass through great spiritual crises, but somehow we feel that they bring us to the heart of things. They open avenues of which we were ignorant, like our Master we learn obedience by the things which we suffer. With the assistance of Isaac, Abraham soon had the altar and the wood in

readiness for the sacrifice but a more difficult task awaited him. How was an old man to bind a young man of twenty-five years? By force? Had it come to a struggle the young man could easily have held his own, and if he did not want to fight, he could have taken to his heels. There is only one answer. Isaac must have been told of the divine command and become a voluntary victim. What faith is displayed by the father! What Christlike courage by the son! Isaac is securely bound. The keen blade flashes in the sun. The father lifts his hand to strike, and suddenly a voice from heaven cried, "Abraham, Abraham; lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me."

Abraham has passed his final examination with honours and is given

A DIVINE ATTESTATION

that he was a God-made man. On Mount Moriah we begin to breathe in a new atmosphere. We have left self-made men far below. They may have great material possessions, but when it comes to the moral and spiritual requirements of the Law, they are weighed in the balances and found wanting. This divine attestation certified to all and sundry that Abraham had graduated from the school in which God-made men are educated.

"Now I know that thou fearest God." Abraham's faith was attested by the hall-mark of God. Upon such a demonstration of faith God was pleased to set His seal. "Now I know that thou fearest God." Was there ever a grander testimony borne to mortal than that?

The sacrifice that God requires is the sacrifice of self. By his sacrifice of self, Abraham anticipated New Testament teaching. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." By our resignation to the divine will, a spiritual crisis may be transformed into a climax.

"Now I know that thou fearest God." This divine attestation carried with it certain high distinctions. "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice." Without seeking it, Abraham was given a place in the sun, he is the father of the faithful, and enjoyed the unique distinction of being called "the friend of God."

CHAPTER XIV

THE ADVENT OF A CONQUEROR

And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about.—Luke IV, 14.

WITH these significant words St. Luke announces the advent of our Lord from the wilderness. “The wilderness!” What a volume of suggestion is contained in the word “wilderness.” It throws a flood of light upon the text. It gives the key to the situation. It introduces us to the scene of an awful combat. It suggests a titanic struggle. Contemplating the word, one naturally thinks of the prophetic promise. “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.”

Our fathers had such a magnificent conception of heaven that they sometimes designated this beautiful world as “a waste howling wilderness.”

To-day it needs neither saint nor prophet to proclaim that many parts of this great world have in a very literal fashion been transformed into “a waste howling wilderness.” Belgium, once so fruitful and so fair, is now a wilderness. North-

ern France is a wilderness, Poland is a wilderness, and alas! these are not all. If we could rest assured that this word in all its bleak and tragic suggestiveness applied only to those parts of the world already named, our sorrow although great would be modified by the hope that the wilderness would eventually rejoice again and blossom as the rose, but it penetrates other regions. This word "wilderness" has defied all geographical boundaries and made its presence felt in every nation under heaven. How many parents and relatives have been driven out into the wilderness, if not into Gethsemane itself, because of this terrible war? Only God knows! Tasting the bitterness of death and passing through a Jordan of sorrow, they have been led up into the wilderness alone.

There is no place on earth that may not be transformed into a wilderness. It may cast a blight over the most luxuriant garden of life. Your fondest dreams may fail of fulfilment and your brightest hopes may be dashed to the ground, but as life is more than a dream, and one hope may be succeeded by another, you need not despair. The wilderness is a place of danger. Unseen foes lurk all around, here the arch-enemy has his stronghold.

Methinks I hear some inexperienced youth suggesting he will never venture across the border into the wilderness. That may be a wise resolution for a stripling because the wilderness is a

place of stern issues. It has its terrors for the weak and the timid, but all the great and the good have braved its dangers and emerged from its experiences equipped for life's work. Why was there such an urgent and insistent demand for Lord Kitchener at the beginning of the war? Because he had been through the wilderness. The wilderness is a testing place. It has its perils and it has its possibilities.

While I would not for a moment minimize its perils, I wish to speak of the power of the wilderness. "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about." Power and fame are two outstanding words in our text and these prizes we would like to obtain, but if we are honest we will acknowledge that power and fame have a vital connection with the wilderness. If we would be men of power and make a bid for fame, we must pass through the wilderness.

Do I hear some would-be warrior asking "Where is the wilderness for I wish to enter it now?" You may find it just where you are. It is the place where the tried man has been, and men tried and true are the demand of the hour. The wilderness is the place from which we naturally shrink. It is the uninviting place. It is the place where we are tempted to shirk, to be, and to do less than our best.

What is our wilderness? It may be and prob-

ably is the place of duty. Duty! the word is so cold and unromantic, it is so arduous and irksome that we would rather not face it. Two choices confront us. Either we must do our duty or die in the wilderness.

The school or the college may be a wilderness. To be shut in with a number of disagreeable subjects, with no possibility of escape, but by the mastery of them, is a wilderness indeed. I can sympathize with young people who find themselves in this wilderness. Have I not literally sweat in reviewing the host of subjects to be mastered before a man is supposed to be fitted for his life's work? But that sweat is as oil on our mental machinery. It makes it work. Young people! others before you have felt the difficulties of the situation in school and college, as you are doing. They looked these difficult problems in the face and determined to solve them, and they did. Where there's a will, there's a way. The subjects you have to study now may appear to be difficult, but before you proceed much farther along the road of experience you will find that the most difficult subject you have to deal with is yourself.

Another very unusual place to find a wilderness is in the Christian home. The home has been described as a well-watered garden, and a well-watered garden is a prophecy of an abundance of flowers and fruit. The Christian home is regarded by the wise as the garden of the Lord.

In that garden are to be found some of the most fragrant flowers as well as the most delicious fruit. Yet some young people who are in those gardens are not content. They dislike discipline, they resent chastisement, they fret and fume at this law and that restraint until for them, at least, the garden of life is transformed into a wilderness.

Let me illustrate what I mean. There was once a young man who lived in a most refined home. His father was wealthy, and also very considerate, but this young man was not content. He made things as disagreeable as possible, both for himself and others, until one day he decided to leave home. He was too much curbed and under too much restraint at home, so he determined to go out to see the world and withal to enjoy life. He went away and being a young man of means, he soon made friends. We will not follow him into the questionable places he frequented, or tarry to detail his wanderings, suffice to say, he was reduced in circumstances and began to be in want. Without means, without friends, and far from home, what could he do? He applied for several respectable positions, but was rejected because he could not produce satisfactory references. Finally, in sheer desperation, he joined himself to a citizen of that country who sent him to the fields to feed swine. In that reduced plight his better nature awoke. And when he came to himself, he said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish

with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, ‘Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.’” When he went away from home he was “beside himself.” But when he got rid of his insanity he remembered what he had left, and resolved without further delay to return.

Young people who do not appreciate the unspeakable privileges of a Christian home are “beside themselves.” I charge you, one and all, to honour your parents and do your part to keep the flowers blooming in the garden of your home life.

Again, the wilderness may penetrate our places of business. The minister engaged in the King’s business sometimes gets discouraged. The scene of his labours may be difficult in the extreme, the response may be small, and the good man is tempted to believe he is in the wrong place. I have heard a young minister bemoan the fact of a small congregation in a small place. “With a mere handful of people in a school-house and some of them asleep one can’t put forth his best effort. Anything will do so long as you talk for half an hour.” Alas! that fatal “anything will do.” It spells disaster. Will “anything do”? No! When we address our fellows as ambassadors of Christ, anything will not do. Faithful preaching in every school-house will make its influence felt throughout Christendom. Faithful

preaching in a small congregation makes it easier for the man in the city pulpit. Besides, the wilderness, with its difficulties and discouragements, is the place where great preachers are made. Jesus preached to some very small congregations and so did St. Paul, therefore let us preach as faithfully and fervently to three as we would preach to three thousand and even a wilderness will inspire us with its possibilities.

Your wilderness may be the store in which you are conducting your business. Unfortunately it was built in the wrong street. It has the disadvantage of a poor location. You could do fifty per cent. more business if you were not handicapped by being on a back street. Situated as you are it is not worth while putting forth your energies to redeem the situation. "Not worth while!" These are not the words of a strong man. "Not worth while!" Have you honestly tried to make it worth while? Any average tradesman can run a business which has all the advantages of a good name and a suitable location. It requires the sustained efforts of a strong man to develop a thriving business under adverse conditions. If you have goods the public need, you have a right to make the effort. Utilize your genius. You may have powers of which you never yet have dreamed. It may require the aid of a hard place to bring out the best in you. There is a kind of omnipotence in patient and persistent effort. Therefore, rise in your might! Apply

yourself with a will and soon the wilderness of your business-life will bloom and blossom as the rose.

Your wilderness may be your farm. It may be so rough and stony that you are tempted to relax your efforts and be content with the second best. What has been said of other callings applies equally to you. Faithful and persistent labour will work wonders. Regard the difficulties of the situation as a challenge to your manhood, and rejoice to be a labourer together with God amid the great forces of nature.

Is your wilderness a place of disappointment? Bereavement? Obscurity or adversity? Jesus has been there and, what is more, He has returned.

Why did He return? Because He fought His way through and came out with flying colours. "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about." "Jesus returned!"

A great many who go up into the wilderness never come back. What an alarming proportion of the Israelites fell in the wilderness! They failed to reach the land of promise because of unbelief. Unbelief and disobedience decided their destiny. Their example is a warning to us. There is a wilderness we must all pass through if we would wear the unfading crown of manhood or womanhood. By faith and prayer we may

not only pass through the wilderness, but learn at all times and in every place to trust and obey, to do God's will in God's way. The way out of the wilderness may mean the way of the Cross. Some saints are chosen to serve, and some to suffer. One remark made by the Lord to Ananias, respecting Saul, of Tarsus, is very significant, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake." The reproach of Christ may entail suffering, but let us rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for His name's sake. And above all let us continue, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

"Jesus returned" from the wilderness and it is instructive to note how He returned. He did not come forth weak and emaciated. He "returned in the power of the Spirit." The glory of a divinely developed manhood was upon Him. He came forth full of spiritual power, ready for all the exacting and exhausting demands that were henceforth to be made upon Him. How majestic is the tread of the man who comes forth from "that great and terrible wilderness," "in the power of the Spirit!" The smile of divine approval sat upon the brow of the Saviour. This cannot be said of all who emerge from the struggle. Some come forth bearing the scars of the conflict and others creep out exhausted, looking

very much worse for the encounter. They failed to appreciate the purpose and possibilities of the wilderness. The wilderness is the place where decisive decisions are made, where we recognize "whose we are" and decide "whom we will serve." We regard the wilderness as a place from which we should escape as soon as possible. If we are in the wilderness we will make a fearful mistake if we leave it without the divine anointing. If we, like our Master, return "in the power of the Spirit," our fellows will be constrained to admit that the wilderness experience has been worth while.

If it is instructive to learn how "Jesus returned," it is equally instructive to learn where He came to. "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee." Having graduated from the wilderness with honours, we would naturally expect to hear of Him labouring in Judea, the royal province, and having His headquarters in Jerusalem. Such, however, was not the case. He returned, not to Judea, but into Galilee,—Galilee, the ordinary work-a-day-province. Into Galilee with its opportunities and its needs Jesus came again to preach the Kingdom of God. After gaining a unique victory and receiving a fresh influx of divine power, He did not despise Galilee, He did not feel that He would be wasting His time and talents on Galileans, but threw Himself heart and soul into the work of ministering to the needs of the common people. As we return vic-

torious from our moral and spiritual crises, we too are anxious for Christian work. With the joy of battle in our breasts, we yearn for conquest, but we would like to choose our Galilee. In our present position we feel too cramped for glorious achievement. If we could choose our Galilee, we probably would choose the front and there in the limelight do deeds of daring and win the applause of an admiring world. Men are needed at the front. All honour to the men who have responded to the call. Men are also needed behind the scenes. It may be your lot and mine to work where there is nothing to thrill or nerve to action, where there is no applause and little or no appreciation. But after all it is behind the scenes where men are made. Every man who goes to the front is an expert. Behind the scenes he was drilled to act with the precision of a piece of machinery. Behind the scenes, in our humble Galilee, let us give of our best, and eventually recognition and appreciation will come. "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about." Even in Galilee Jesus became famous. Some have achieved fame in Europe, others by the discovery of the Poles. It may not be our privilege to ride on seas of glory, but let us make an honest attempt to merit fame at home. We need not be concerned about the fame, but we should be very much concerned about the power. Only men of

spiritual power can share in the Master's work of extending and establishing the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER XV

A NATIONAL CRISIS

But I will teach you the good and the right way: Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things He hath done for you.—I Sam. XII, 23, 24.

OUR text is found among the concluding words of one of the most significant speeches ever delivered before a national assembly. This great speech was delivered by one of the noblest of the noble men whose names adorn the annals of Jewish history. He was at once a prophet, a priest, and a judge. Dedicated to the service of God before he was born, his life had been one long dual act of divine worship and devotion to duty. Samuel was a living embodiment of righteousness, and as such he commanded respect. Added to his integrity and his unique position in the nation, were years of experience of the stern realities of life, and when this venerable man with his marred visage and his hoary locks stands up and motions for silence, the flower and the strength of Israel do well to give good heed.

This was a great occasion. It was a great oc-

casion for the king. There he stands, a young man of prepossessing appearance, and magnificent proportions, powerful in body and supple in limb, head and shoulders above his fellows, honesty upon his visage and a god-like purpose kindling in his soul. There stands Saul, the son of Kish, he is the Lord's anointed. This is a great day for him, for he has just been crowned king of Israel. This was a great occasion for the people. They had come from Dan to Beersheba, and had just witnessed the coronation ceremony. They stood on the threshold of a new era. Henceforth they were to be known as a monarchy, they were to have a king to rule over them. This august occasion had been preceded by the crushing defeat of the Ammonites at Jabesh-gilead, and those warriors were full of the joy of conquest. They saw visions and dreamed dreams of future supremacy. To a man, they were vibrating with feelings of affection and tokens of loyalty to their king. This was a great occasion for the prophet. He was master of ceremonies. He was the officiating high priest, to him had fallen the honour of crowning the first king of Israel. He was the most conspicuous figure on that momentous occasion, his every act had been followed by wondering eyes, but the fact of notoriety did not make it a great occasion to him. He was impressed, not with the grandeur, but with the solemnity of the occasion.

There is such a thing as progress downwards, and where the nation saw a climax he saw a crisis,

and as he rose to speak the scene was dramatic in the extreme. The young king and his jubilant subjects were about to hear something they would remember long after the venerable prophet was dead and buried. As he is assisted to the platform from which he is to deliver his inaugural address, he is greeted with a tremendous ovation. He is the grand old man of the nation, for upwards of forty years he has interpreted to them the divine will, and as he begins his speech, the people give him the reception he so richly deserves. That Samuel was a powerful and convincing speaker is attested by the fragments of his great speech which have come down to us. He had no use for flattery, although he knew how to touch and play upon a popular chord.

He began his immortal utterance with a reminder of his having acceded to their request—a request which had not been for anything base or trivial, but a request fraught with far-reaching issues, they had requested a king. Imagine the enthusiasm when reference was made to His Majesty. Listen to the cheers as, with a wave of his hand, the prophet cried, "Behold your king! the king who is henceforth to walk before you." There was a subdued hush when the prophet referred to his age. "I am old and gray-headed." I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. My life has been lived in the open. I have moved in and out among you. You are acquainted with my manner of life

and now, "Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed, whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you." The effect produced by this public challenge was tremendous. To a man, the people cried, "Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand." It was a daring challenge, and a remarkable vindication. I do not for a moment imagine that Samuel was seeking self-aggrandizement by such a spectacular vindication of his official purity. It was rather a means to an end. He had something to say of supreme significance, and he wanted to enjoy the confidence of his hearers and also to make them feel that he had their highest interests at heart. It was an impressive moment when the prophet called upon God and the king to witness between him and his hearers. Then he pronounced the awe-inspiring name of Jehovah, and requested that there be no more demonstration. He wanted them to be quiet, and listen to the burden of his speech.

"Now therefore stand still that I may reason with you before the Lord." Ever since the day on which you sent a deputation demanding a king, your request has given me food for thought. On that occasion the supposed advantages enjoyed by the Philistines and the Hittites, by Syria, Ammon, Moab, and Edom were cited to me. Your

contention was that these respective peoples have kings to go before them into battle, while you are seriously handicapped because you have no king. To-day, I wish to emphasize the fundamental fact in our history. It is this, Israel has always had a King, you have been clamouring for a change of government, and your dissatisfaction warrants the assertion that you have failed to realize our unique national ideal. Had you been faithful to God, ours would have been the strongest and most beneficent form of government on the face of the earth. Your plea to me, as expressed by your delegation, was that you wanted to be like other nations, whereas our distinctive glory has been to be unlike them in election, in character, and in destiny.

Let this thought sink deep into your hearts, Israel has always had a King. Who is our King? "It is the Lord." Where is the king among the surrounding nations, upon whom you have turned your distorted vision, who can compare in power and in glory with our King? Our King is great in conquest and achievement, great in character and resources. Contemplating His character and achievements our great lawgiver cried, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders." You revere the memory of our great national heroes, and you kindle the fires of patriotism in the breasts of your children by reciting the exploits of Moses and Aaron, and telling of the remarkable progress

made by our forefathers, from the land of bondage into the goodly heritage which is now our home. I commend you for your zeal, but who made Moses and Aaron a possibility? "It is the Lord that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. This is an important piece of our history which you have overlooked. The Lord is the fundamental fact of our national life. Think you, Moses of his own free will and accord would ever have bid defiance to Pharaoh, and championed our cause in Egypt? No, never! The Lord appeared to him in the bush of flame and called him to undertake this herculean task. That Moses was reluctant and pleaded inability is a matter of history, but he went because of the assurance he received that the Lord was with him. That the Lord was with Moses and Aaron was demonstrated to the satisfaction of our enslaved ancestors, and moreover to the satisfaction of Pharaoh. It was the Lord who caused our fathers to triumph over the greatest empire in the world. Pharaoh would compare favourably with any of the kings you cited to me, nay, he would overshadow them all put together, and yet, what was he to withstand the Lord our King?

You reminded me of the victories of the kings around us, but what are they in comparison to the victories gained over Sihon and Og? Our fathers begged leave to pass through the Amorite land. Sihon refused, and prepared to give battle.

Every man in the nation fit to bear arms fought in the Amorite army against Israel. A desperate struggle ensued, and the most callous among you cannot deny that it was no mere human force that enabled our fathers, unused as they were to warfare, to subdue so formidable a king and conqueror as Sihon. Og, the king of Bashan, and his people were the remnants of the giants, in height they were like cedars, and in strength like oaks, but they were routed by our ancestors who went against them in the name of the Lord. Every great engagement in our history supports the basal fact of our national life, that the Lord is our King. Time would fail to tell of all the righteous acts of the Lord, of the glorious conquests which He wrought by the hand of Moses and of Joshua. Where is there a king to be compared to our King? That the Lord is our King is supported by two series of facts which are so evident that he who runs may read. The first series demonstrates that whenever we as a people have forsaken the Lord we have come to grief, and the second likewise proves that whenever we as a nation have repented of our sins and cried unto the Lord, we have been delivered. When our fathers sinned, the Lord gave them into the hand of Sisera, but when in penitence and faith they sought the Lord "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." Again and yet again, they went and served other gods; and the Lord brought upon them the hosts of the Moabites, the Midian-

ites, and the Philistines, and when they repented of their evil and turned again, the Lord raised up Barak and Deborah, Gideon and Jephthah, Samson and Samuel and ye dwelled safe. These are a few of the mighty acts of the Lord our King. Other kings doubtless can boast of conquests, but can they boast of conquests such as these?

And now what have you done? In the light of the great fundamental fact of our history where do you stand? You have sinned. You have proved yourselves unworthy of the glorious traditions of our race. You have despised your birthright by requesting a king when the Lord your God was your King. Behold the heavens; not a cloud in sight. To impress upon you the awfulness of your sin, I will call upon the Lord and He will send thunder and rain. The prophet prayed. Instantly the lightning flashed and the thunder rolled. The panic stricken people besought the prophet to pray for them. At the beginning of this inaugural address they felt secure in the presence of their king, but now they see what power both he and his troops combined can summon to check the fury of the storm. They are helpless before this demonstration of divine power. "And all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel."

The prophet had proved what he set out to prove, the awful nearness of God to man, and of man to God. He had shown them the place

God must occupy in the human breast. The people in their foolhardiness evidently had thought that loyalty and obedience to their king would be the sum total of their moral requirements, but the prophet charges them to remember that having a king in no sense and in no degree exempts them from their moral and spiritual obligations to God. The people now rightly felt that they had rejected God and also the prophet, and they wanted to know what Samuel's future attitude would be.

His reply was worthy of his character and of his God. "Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you, but I will teach you the good and the right way, only fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart, for consider how great things He hath done for you."

For its immediate effect on a national assembly this speech has few equals. But a more serious question remains, What effect is it going to have upon us? When delivered this address had only a local, or at least a national significance, but the principle it enforces is eternal, and capable of universal application. We have not listened to it to good purpose unless we have felt the force of the fundamental fact of all national, social, and individual life, namely, the fact of God. We have failed to grasp its abiding significance unless we are convinced that, as God wrought out the destiny of His ancient people, He is working out

the destiny of His people to-day. And we will not profit by this instructive speech unless we apply its principles and its warnings to our own nation, yea, to our own lives.

In these strenuous times thinkers are seeking to determine what is the best form of government. You may wonder what form of government I favor, whether I favor a limited monarchy or a democratic form of government. Brethren! I have spoken altogether in vain unless I have convinced you that for one I believe the world is God-ruled. We have been told repeatedly that the critics are endeavoring to eliminate the supernatural from the Bible. They cannot do it, even though they should try. What is more, no man, whether he be sceptic, critic, or diplomat, can eliminate the supernatural from national, social, and individual life. Depend upon it, whoever is winning or losing, God in Christ is marching on. Jesus Christ our Saviour is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The place and power of Christ as the King of men may be disputed by the lovers of mammon and the despisers of justice, but it is an indisputable fact nevertheless and unless the worshippers of mammon and the oppressors of mankind desist and repent, they are doomed. If God spake in the terrible accents of thunder at the behest of Samuel think you He is mute to-day? God is speaking to us all from Europe because we have disregarded His authority. He is bidding us note the consequences of

sin. And this we cannot deny, the world has put God behind the back too long. May God have mercy upon us! In deep contrition let us acknowledge His righteous rule.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MAN WE MOST URGENTLY NEED

Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.—I Sam. XII, 23.

THESE are the words of a man after God's own heart. He expressed himself thus in a crisis. Nothing reveals the moral stature of a man so clearly as his attitude in a critical moment. A crisis had been reached in the history of the children of Israel. They were a distinguished people, the children of the covenant, God's own elect. Centuries before, God had entered into covenant relationship with Abraham, their father. Later, He had ratified the covenant by the giving of the Law. He had fed them with bread from heaven and given them a liberal supply of water in the desert. He had led them by a way that they knew not, and brought them to a land of plenty. He had routed their enemies, and blessed them with peace and prosperity. As a people they had enjoyed a unique experience. God had spoken to them as He had spoken to none other. He had lived among them and showed His glory, His power and compassion as He had shown it to none beside, but after all His exertions on

their behalf, they miserably failed Him, they cast Him behind the back. They ignored His authority; for in preference to a heavenly King, they requested an earthly one.

Thus, as I already have intimated, a crisis had been reached. With God as their King, the children of Israel had risen from a single family to be a first-rate nation. With God as their King, they had impressed other peoples with their power; and nations both far and near felt it to be a matter of policy to be on good terms with a people who had never lost in a righteous engagement. Time after time, God had raised up men to lead His armies on to victory and one of these sons of God was Samuel. He was the judge in Israel when the Israelites made their request for an earthly king. As God's representative he might have reasoned thus: This people by such a request have intimated that they prefer an earthly monarch to a heavenly King, and consequently my services as the ambassador of the Most High are dispensed with.

It would have been quite natural to retaliate and say if you are tired of God as your King you may accept my resignation as your prophet. Samuel did not take this course but chose a more excellent way. True to his vocation, he told them of the consequences of their decision. He told them how grievously they had sinned, how they had wounded the heart of God, but instead of forgetting himself and his peculiar relationship

to God, as they had done, he said, "Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you."

Samuel was an exceptionally attractive character. Only a good man could give expression to such words as we have chosen for our text. His early life and work is full of inspiration and encouragement to every pious youth. His strenuous labours on behalf of his country, together with his stainless career, is a concrete example of the purity and power of a life lived in uncompromising integrity. He was dedicated to the service of God before he was born. He served the Lord from childhood to old age, and at the close of his public career he challenged the people to witness against him before the Lord, "Whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. And they said thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand." Samuel's object in this challenge was not so much to vindicate himself as to show that he was disinterested. He was not impelled by any selfish motive. He had no axe to grind. He was now an old man, and he knew that unless he enjoyed the confidence of his hearers his advice would be received with suspicion. After assuring the people that he had no ambitious intentions in this grave matter, he proved to the satisfaction of one and

all that they had sinned grievously in desiring an earthly monarch when the Lord was their King. He asked for a sign from heaven. Immediately there was a great thunderstorm. The people were terrified and said to Samuel, "Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil to ask us a king. And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: . . . For the Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you a people unto Himself. Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you."

In this emphatic utterance of the prophet, we can hardly fail to recognize two outstanding features regarding prayer, i.e., the place he gave it, and the light in which he viewed it. Consider the Place he gave it. He was a renowned prophet. For many years during his early ministry he assisted in the Temple, and it is recorded of him that "he judged Israel all the days of his life." Was there ever a better judge in the land than Samuel who gave intercessory prayer first place? Is it not remarkable that this man who had distinguished himself as a priest, as a prophet, and as a judge should esteem intercessory prayer as the highest vocation available to man?

There are certain individuals who take cheap and shallow views of life who seek to inform us that it is foolish to pray as prayer is absolutely

in vain. I sincerely hope we can refute such arguments by our own experience. Supported by the long experience of Samuel and the best men in every age we reply, "More things are wrought by prayer than the world dreams of," and if ever there was a clear call for the people of God to pray, that call comes to us to-day. It is to be feared that prayer does not retain the place in our individual lives it occupied in the lives of our fathers. They took time to meditate upon God and to pray. As a result, there were giants in the land in those days. They were moral and spiritual giants and their deep piety found frequent expression in earnest, believing, prevailing prayer. The commendable tenacity with which they besieged the throne of Grace and clung to the mighty promises of God resulted in showers of blessing. "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you."

You will pardon my purposely going a little way behind the text and saying, That we need to intercede with God on our own behalf. Let us acknowledge, once for all, we cannot live the life of faith without prayer. We need the abundant mercy of God to pardon and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We need the energizing power of God to enable us to overcome every weakness and to equip us for service. We need divine guidance and divine companionship. We have been informed by a Christian poet that "prayer is the Christian's vital breath—that prayer is his

native air." If that be so we must live in the atmosphere of prayer.

Do we know anything about prayer as an atmosphere? The atmosphere of prayer is a healthy atmosphere. No feeble-bodied, weak-kneed, dim-eyed Christian can live in the atmosphere of prayer. They all become "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." The atmosphere of prayer is a clear atmosphere. It enables us to penetrate the darkness of political strife and international gloom and discern the immovable pillars of the great white throne. How the vision is intensified when we learn "always to pray and not to faint"! The spiritual giants of former days saw God not only on a cloudless day, but in the darkness and in the storm. "He maketh the clouds his chariot and walketh on the wings of the wind." The atmosphere of prayer is a bracing atmosphere. It stimulates and invigorates until men begin to realize what God means when He says, "One shall chase a thousand and two shall put ten thousand to flight." Come! oh you spiritual cripples! Ye lame and halt and blind! and learn to pray.

Again, we need to intercede with God on behalf of our homes. Samuel came from a praying home. He had a praying mother. He was a child of prayer. His mother taught him to pray. He had prayed all his life, until it became the master conviction of his soul that intercession was the mightiest lever at his command. How happy

the parents who have an altar in their own homes! How blest the child, who like Samuel is taught the efficacy of prayer in his own home! Those of us who are parents have grave responsibilities. We need guidance in the discharge of our important duties. The only way we can transform our responsibility into a divinely appointed privilege is by the gift of intercession. To train children aright is not an easy matter, but it becomes a sacred trust when we learn to pray without ceasing for our homes. I plead with you, one and all, to establish the time-honoured custom of family worship. Build again those family altars which have been broken down. Young people! as members of the home, I ask you to assist in this most urgent task. Only as you pray at stated periods in the privacy of your own room, can you live lives of uncompromising integrity and fill the atmosphere you breathe with the fragrance of an unsullied life. Pray alone! by all means, but do not let that suffice. Take an active part in family worship. Your hearty co-operation will stimulate and encourage your parents, and make you a greater power for good. Our parents pleaded with God on our behalf long before we came to realize the power of prayer, therefore we are unspeakably indebted to them, and we are in duty bound to pray for those of whom the world is not worthy. The power of prayer has been illustrated in every great religious awakening, and it has invariably emanated from the home.

Again, we need to intercede with God on behalf of the church. Our Master and Lord has left us a most inspiring example regarding prayer for the church, "the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." The words of Jesus have gripped the imagination of the world, but the prayers of Jesus must ever make the most eloquent appeal to the would-be intercessor. It was a no less distinguished person than our Lord who said, "Men ought always to pray and not to faint." His own example was the most telling illustration of what He taught. Every great event in His public ministry was preceded by prayer. Often after working hard all day, He would retire into a mountain apart and spend the night in prayer. You say, "What an exhausting business!" No! We have a mistaken idea that intercession is exacting and exhausting. Jesus, by word and deed, proved it to be divinely refreshing. What was the meaning of His reply to the enquiry of His disciples, "I have meat to eat ye know not of?" The earthly career of our Lord was short. To His followers He said, "It is expedient for you that I go away." But before His departure He lifted his eyes to heaven and made intercession on behalf of all believers. "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for those whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine—Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as Thou Father art in Me, and I in Thee,

that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me." Although our Lord has passed into the heavens, the work of intercession is still one of the offices He fills by divine appointment.

If you need any further incentive to pray for the church, take a glance at St. Paul and all the great saints who have wrought righteousness in the earth. St. Paul always appears to advantage, but he is never more irresistible than when on his knees. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breath, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

The work of Martin Luther only can be accounted for by the fact that he prayed. He prayed! and became the monk that shook the world! Listen to John Knox as he prays, "Give me Scotland or I die." John Wesley was also a man of faith and prayer.

While we rejoice to-day in the gift of great preachers, the need of the hour is for intercessors, for men who will stand between the porch

and the altar and cry, "O Lord, how long? Wilt Thou not revive us again?" Further, we need to intercede with God on behalf of our country. The prophets of Israel were intensely patriotic and Samuel was no exception to the rule. Although deeply wounded in spirit, because his people had sinned so grievously, he continued to pray for the nation. A nation needs the prayers of its intercessors at all times, but never more urgently than in the hour of its sin and shame. When we meditate upon our country and its conquests, the prevailing tendency is to sing, "My country, 'tis of thee," but when we remember our country with its moral and spiritual needs, we are constrained to pray.

The national anthem and all our great national hymns always appeal to us and why? Because they are prayers by which we approach and supplicate the great white throne. Christian patriotism finds its most appropriate expression in prayer. At a time like this, when war is raging, when thrones are tottering, when thousands of our noblest young men have responded to the call of their king and country, when thousands already have made the supreme sacrifice, and laid down their lives, it is the bounden duty of every loyal Christian to pray that God will arise and let His enemies be scattered. You are doubtless praying that we as a nation may be delivered from our foes without, but mighty as are our foes without, they are not so much to be feared as our foes

within.

Admiral Beatty gave us food for reflection when he said, "England will conquer when she gets down on her knees." What a testimony to the place and power of prayer. Oh you intercessors! Pray on! "More things are brought by prayer than the world dreams of!" Therefore pray! Pray that those moral and social evils which thrive upon the life blood of our brothers and sisters may soon be overthrown. Pray that we as a people may impress the world, not so much with our military efficiency, as with our love of fair-play, our sense of justice, and our desire for righteousness and peace with honour. Intercessors on behalf of their beloved land never had a more urgent call than they have to-day.

Finally we need to intercede with God on behalf of the world. The Christian program is all-embracing. Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." When we besiege the throne of Grace the world is our parish! Our motto is, "Christ for the world; the world for Christ." Many weapons have been invented to insure the conquest of the world. What weapon will begin to compare with intercessory prayer? "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

"Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you."

In taking a parting glance at our text, notice the Light in which the prophet viewed intercessory prayer. To cease praying for his people would be a sin against the Lord. It is imperative for us to pray! Our Lord both by example and precept has commanded us to pray. "Men ought always to pray and not to faint." It is our duty to pray. Therefore as we recognize the needs of our homes, of the church, and the world, let us say in the language of Samuel, "Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you."

CHAPTER XVII

AN EFFECTIVE WEAPON

He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword.—II Sam. XXIII, 10.

THE hero of our text is Eleazar, one of David's three mighty men. In graphic terms we are told how he achieved fame. The Philistines had come up against the Israelites, who, instead of charging and routing their enemies, in the name of Jehovah, beat a hasty and disorderly retreat. It was an embarrassing situation. To see the men of Israel running pursued by Philistines was humiliating in the extreme. But, in "the armies of the living God," the soldiers are not all cowards, and it is a minor detail to Him to save by many or by few. Eleazar, coming upon the scene at this critical juncture, turned the battle at the gate. He saw at a glance the true state of affairs, and without waiting to ask the reason his fellow-soldiers had fled in confusion, with never so much as a thought of following their inglorious example, "he arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword." In our text we see a great warrior with a most effective

weapon, and the irresistible conclusion to which we are carried is, that he knew how to use it. There was no question about the result of the encounter. The Philistines were utterly routed. "And the Lord wrought a great victory that day, and the people returned after him only to spoil." We have our battles to fight, and our conduct in many an unexpected crisis will decide the fortunes of the day.

The Philistines of wrong are still defying "the armies of the living God." With such blasphemers, there can be no compromise. Fighting men, resourceful and courageous, are in urgent demand. Never in the history of the world were there greater opportunities for conquest and achievement than await the "mighty men" of to-day. Our weapons in this holy war "are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." For both offensive and defensive purposes we are splendidly equipped. Into our hands has been put "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." As we review our ranks it is a great relief to find that we have been well supplied with swords.

But as we prepare for the fray, as we note the unskilful wielding of their weapons on the part of so many of our men, we are soon convinced that the supreme need of every soldier is a tighter grip of "the sword of the Spirit." To every member of the Christian Staff, it is an alarming experience to discover that so many of our soldiers

have not learned to handle the sword effectively. It is nothing short of a tragedy to see men examining the handle, when they should be wielding the sword. How hopeless the situation appears when so many of the rank and file are speculating as to whether the sword will bear the strain likely to be put upon it! And others, with a patronizing air, informing us that while some notable victories have been won by the aid of this weapon in the past, it is now old-fashioned, out of date, and consequently must be hung among the relics and marked obsolete.

While we are debating the merits of the sword, the Philistines of iniquity are laughing us to scorn. But thank God the distressing situation is still saved by the unexpected appearance of an Eleazar, who rushes single-handed into combat to the discomfiture of his enemies and the amazement of his fellows. Eleazar's blade was keen because he knew how to use it. Although faced by fearful odds, "he arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword." What a fighter! A mighty man, with a poor weapon, will make inroads where a half-hearted soldier, with the best sword obtainable will turn and flee. Eleazar had faith in God, faith in himself, and unbounded confidence in his sword. When we who are chosen to be soldiers rise up and smite the Philistines, we shall be fully convinced that "the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword,

piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." "The word of God!" Who can estimate the dimensions of its authority? It has been treasured as the most valuable asset of national and individual life. Kings and people have cried with equal enthusiasm, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Prophets and peasants have proved its power to quicken, to cheer, and to sustain. It has stood the most severe tests in the rude shocks of life, and to-day, as the result of a personal knowledge of its vitality, millions are prepared to bind it to their hearts.

But, although the Bible has been cherished by its friends, its authority has been challenged and ridiculed by its foes. Early in its history Lucian declared Christianity to be "the latest folly in the world's madhouse." In the eighteenth century Voltaire allowed himself to describe the Bible as "a tissue of fables fit only for cobblers and tailors." Quite recently a college professor questioned the wisdom of placing the Bible in the hands of our children. Thus from a variety of sources we are informed that the sword should take its place among the relics of the past.

In replying to the question, Is the sword of the Spirit obsolete? I am going to give you the testimony of some of the ablest scholars, the most ardent critics, and some of the most influential

leaders of our race. My decision to bring these men before you to speak for themselves arises from the fact that so few take pains to examine the Bible for themselves, that so many are content to be influenced by second-hand and third-rate opinions about the Bible, which are retailed in bar-rooms and at street corners, and I wish to prove to your satisfaction that any man, who, in these days, speaks disparagingly of the Bible is either wicked or insane. We hear a great deal about higher criticism. And from that school of higher criticism which is composed of the foremost biblical scholars, as well as the most ardent believers, we have absolutely nothing to fear. In fact we are greatly indebted to our brave Christian scholars who have undertaken their strenuous labours, not because they doubt or question, but because they believe that we have received "an authentic revelation of the One True God."¹

But there is another school of higher criticism very different from the one I have named. The late Dr. Watson in his book, *God's Message to the Human Soul*, states the case admirably in regard to this latter school. He says, "The Church is the guardian of the Bible, the critic is only its editor, his province is the letter, he may not meddle with the spirit of the book. There is a danger that a swollen and omniscient criticism should break bounds and become the dictator to faith.

¹Principal Sir George Adam Smith, D.D., LL.D. *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*.

The temptation of all specialism is insubordination to knowledge as a whole, the weakness of all specialism is complacent ignorance of other departments. When one critic of our day reduces the teaching of Jesus to a few sayings, and another, full of new wine, denies any epistles to St. Paul, one learns the limits of specialized scholarship and the folly of giving a blank check to critics of irresponsible judgment. One waits for the critic who shall boldly say, as some have been hinting, that Jesus was only a lay figure on which a beautiful tradition has been draped, and that He never lived any more than He rose from the dead. We shall then have the supreme irony of a scholar sitting within his study, and proving to his own satisfaction from a microscopic examination of manuscripts that there never has been any Christ, while outside his airless study, if he had only ears to hear the tramp of innumerable feet, he would know that the risen and triumphant Christ had for twenty centuries been marching along the high road of history in the living Church which is His Body and His instrument, His evidence and His manifestation."

In spite of all that has been written or said against the Bible, it has survived every attack and is gaining an ever expanding influence upon every succeeding generation. In spite of obstacles the Bible has been translated into more languages and dialects than any other book in the world, while sales of copies of the Bible are far in excess of any

other book year by year. In listening to representative witnesses regarding the place and power of the Holy Scriptures, the testimony is invariably the same. If we turn to literature Theodore Parker, so brilliant and so penetrating, says: "This collection of books has taken such a hold upon the world as has no other. The literature of Greece, which goes up like incense from that land of temples and heroic deeds, has not half the influence of this book. It goes equally to the cottage of the plain man and the palace of the king. It is woven into the literature of the scholar and colours the talk of the street."¹

The masters in the realm of literature acknowledge their indebtedness to the Bible. No student of literature can study Shakespeare without realizing the influence the Bible had upon him in his work. While Bacon, Macaulay, and Ruskin are loud in their praise of its inspiration and beauty of diction. Shall we sheathe this sword which has conquered and graced Literature?

If we turn from literature to the great moral forces that make for righteousness, where will we find anything that begins to compare with the Bible? The Bible has changed the face of the whole civilized world. To the Bible we are indebted for the rise of what we term modern civilization. Every great epoch in modern civilization is traceable to the Bible. An open Bible was re-

¹ Dr. Gunsaulus in his memorable reply to Ingersoll. *Bible vs. Infidelity.*

sponsible for the Reformation and the rise of Puritanism. These two epochs give the key to all that is vital and enduring in our national life. To the Bible we are indebted for the abolition of slavery, for the elevation of women, for the erection of asylums of mercy in every civilized land. As a statesman Moses is still exerting a tremendous influence upon the world. We are indebted to him for an exposition of law. The Bible message to nations was never more applicable than it is to-day. "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." True to this principle, nations have risen to eminence; false to this principle, nations have dropped out of sight. By steady adherence to this principle our own nation has attained an unparalleled greatness. So long as we recognize that we are the stewards of God we shall prosper but if we, as a nation, forget or ignore our obligations, we shall perish. Every patriot needs to give good heed to the words of Daniel Webster, "If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper, but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity."¹

Shall we sheathe this sword which has championed and continues to champion the cause of righteousness, and which is the exponent of free-

¹ Dr. Gunsaulus. *Bible vs. Infidelity.*

dom? In certain quarters it is popular to wax eloquent about the brilliant achievements of Rome before she was influenced by Bible teaching. In her day, Rome was a great world-power. We cheerfully acknowledge her exploits and give her full credit for the part she played in civilization, but the history of Rome is a telling illustration of the fact that, "Righteousness exalteth a nation but sin is a reproach to any people." To ascertain her true condition we must listen to one of her own sons. Lucian¹ writes: "If any one loves wealth and is dazed by gold, if any one measures happiness by purple and power, if any one brought up among flatterers and slaves has never had a conception of liberty, frankness, and truth; if any one has wholly surrendered himself to pleasure, full tables, carousals, lewdness, sorcery, and deceit, let him to go to Rome." With all her boasted pomp and power Rome wore the shackles of moral slavery. Where, I ask, will you find such oppressive slavery as among those who are the slaves of sin?

Wherever the Bible message has been proclaimed in its purity and power, slaves have been liberated, class distinctions have been obliterated, and men have been delivered from every form of moral bondage, until now the world is coming to recognize the Christian fact that where men avail themselves of that freedom which is freedom indeed "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision

¹ Dr. Gunsaulus. *Bible vs. Infidelity.*

nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all."

It was the diligent study of the sacred page which led to the emancipation of Martin Luther, which brought him forth as the champion of religious liberty, and enabled him to rescue western Christendom from ecclesiastical tyranny. It was his knowledge of man's inheritance in Christ Jesus imparted by "the Word" that constrained John Knox to pray, "Give me Scotland, or I die." It was the same mighty sword that put fire in the blood of Garibaldi as he was seeking to effect the deliverance of his native land. As men rallied to his standard, some of them asked what they might expect as a reward of their labours. In effect he said, "I promise you hardships, suffering, and it may be death, but by God's grace I promise you a free Italy." They rallied to his standard to a man, and you know the result.

Shall we sheathe this sword which has played such an important part in the physical, the moral, and the spiritual emancipation of the race? Shall we sheathe this sword which has been the safeguard of science? With regard to science the Bible has suffered in the house of its friends. A great deal has been said with the avowed intention of proving that science and the Bible do not agree; in fact, that they are in dire conflict. The reverse is the truth. The whole question has been grossly misrepresented, and aggravated by a misunderstanding of the claims of science and of

the function of the Bible. The Bible was never intended to be the textbook of science. But instead of entering upon the controversy about the Bible and geology, it will be more profitable to hear what two eminent scientific scholars have to say about the Bible. Francis Bacon, the great interpreter of nature, says, "There never was found in any age of the world either religion or law that did so highly exalt the public good as the Bible." The testimony of Professor James Dwight Dana,¹ who died in 1895, and who was recognized by the scientific world as one of the highest authorities on geology without regard to nationality, is of particular interest. He says, "The grand old book of God still stands and this old earth; the more its leaves are turned and pondered, the more will it sustain and illustrate the sacred word."

I repeat, Shall we sheathe this sword which is the herald of a Christian civilization, which is the champion of freedom, the companion of science, and the handbook of religion? After all, it is as a book of religion that the Bible stands or falls. It is pre-eminently the book that reveals God. In its pages we hear God speak. It has led men by a new and living way into the Presence Chamber of the Eternal. The Bible is the textbook of reconciliation. It shows how heaven and earth blend, how righteousness and peace dwell together, it reveals "a new world wherein dwelleth

¹ Dr. Gunsaulus. *Bible vs. Infidelity.*

righteousess." Unless we have heard God speaking to us in this book, we have missed its chief aim. Have we embraced its teaching? Have we claimed its "exceeding great and precious promises?" As we ponder the sacred page are we conscious of an attractive power? Every student of Holy Scripture who is at all acquainted with the needs of his own nature is attracted to "a hill called Calvary."

Let us learn to read the Bible like the illustrious John Seldon.¹ He says: "I have surveyed most of the learning that is among the sons of men, yet at this moment I can recall nothing in them on which to rest my soul, save one from the sacred scriptures, which rises much on my mind. It is this: 'The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' "

Shall we sheathe this sword? Ten thousand times, No! We need it in every righteous engagement. Without it, in the great battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil, we would be vanquished. In the Bible we see one who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express

¹ Dr. Gunsaulus. *Bible vs. Infidelity.*

image of His Person. He stands forth as our Saviour and Friend. He tells us that God is our Father and that Heaven is our home. Have you any misgivings about this book? Are you afraid to place it in the hands of your children? Have any of you found your children to be the worse for reading its pages which glow with the very life and love of God? Ah, no! Many of our children had been happier and holier, had they read it more. When you get home, gather your children together, open "the Word," and read; then kneel together, and call on the name of the God of Bethel, the God of Elijah! "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and your experience will be similar to the apostle who said: "Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell."

With an unrelaxable grip of "the sword of the Spirit" let us rise up and smite the Philistines until our hands are weary, and when we fall exhausted our hands will cleave unto the sword.

There are two things it is imperative for us to learn. They are: that we have a most effective weapon with which to fight the battles of the Lord, and that, almost everything depends upon our swordsmanship. Even after the battle, Eleazar's "hand clave unto the sword." How suggestive and how true! Have we not seen venerable soldiers of Jesus Christ who were stricken in years and who talked of retiring from the fray? They could not do it! They went down

the hill fighting! Their hands clave unto the sword! "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." Brethren, fight on! This is a good fight! This is God's fight and let us help Him to win "a great victory." Of us may it be said, "He fought a good fight," and when he fell "his hand clave unto the sword!"

CHAPTER XVIII

CHRISTIAN COURAGE

He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.—Luke IX, 51.

THE majority of us are better acquainted with such aspects of our Lord's character as His meekness, tenderness, and compassion than we are with His courage. But we only need to be told to look for it to see how remarkably courageous He was. Jesus was the bravest of the brave! We search the gospels in vain for anything approaching cowardice, either in His public or private life. He is the only perfect example of the finest type of courage the world ever has seen.

Our text reveals His attitude in the near prospect of death. "And it came to pass, when the days were well-nigh come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." Mark the force of these words. He was not carried bound, He did not go reluctantly, "He steadfastly set His face." For several months He had been living in the shadow of the Cross. He was under no delusion regarding the future. He was well aware of what was before Him, yet He never hesitated. No! not for a

moment, but imagine the conflict within! Think of His immaculate soul, so sensitive because so pure.

People who possess refined natures are infinitely more susceptible to suffering than the coarse-grained and the vulgar. They experience pains that the sensual and the sordid know nothing of. This was the case with our Lord. None was ever so holy and undefiled as He. Hence the bitter struggle to overcome difficulty, disappointment, and the repugnance of death. We are apt to imagine that Christ, being the Son of God, would not shrink from death as we do. He was the Son of God, He was also the Son of Man, and He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." But we miss the significance of His life and sufferings on our behalf, if we fail to see that He experienced to the full the agony of human woe. That cup was held to His lips, He drank it, and drained it to its bitterest dregs. "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

Think of His years! He was a young man. Red blood was coursing freely through His veins. Life was as dear to Him as it is to any normal youth. The aged may repine and long to depart, but not so the young, especially those who are on the verge of a great career. The cry of youth is not for death, but life, for opportunity, for expression, for expansion. Our natural inclination is not to droop, decay and die. We do not wish for death, but life!

" 'Tis life whereof our nerves are scant,
'Tis life and fuller that we want."

As we think of His years, we are in a better position to understand why He was troubled when a Greek deputation came and addressing Philip said, "Sir, we would see Jesus." When told of their earnest request He was profoundly moved and said, "The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified." The petition of these pious Greeks gave Him the vision of a great opportunity. The full significance of their request burst in upon Him like a flood of light. But the question was, how would He answer them! Their invitation was prompted by the highest motives, and therefore worthy of kindly consideration. But what did it mean? Yes! What did it mean? As the tragedy of the situation gripped Him, He was troubled: He became visibly agitated, and can we wonder when we hear His significant reply, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." He was the seed corn! The hour was approaching when He must die. It needs no vivid imagination to enter into the pathos of that occasion. Would the Lord Christ not have enjoyed the unspeakable privilege given to St. Paul, of carrying the good news of the Kingdom over sea and land; news which would be welcomed and embraced and a nation born in a day?

But before Paul could preach as he did, there was a vital preliminary. There was a death to die! Christ had volunteered to die to save the world and would He draw back? No! Not even this attractive proposition could allure Him from the path which was directing Him to "a hill called Calvary." Our Lord had all the ambition, all the high ideals, and all the enthusiasm of young manhood. He would have rejoiced as a strong man to be favoured with the exhilarating opportunity life presents, but He did not come into the world for a good time. "He pleased not Himself," and "when the days were well-nigh come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

Think of His experiences! They were so diversified as to confirm the impression that "the prince of this world" had marshalled his forces at every strategic point to hinder our Lord's progress, to defeat the divine purpose, or by any means to allure Him from the path He had deliberately chosen. We are apt to imagine, after his crushing defeat in the wilderness, that the devil would leave Christ severely alone. He did leave Him, but only for a season. And we must remember that from the time when Satan tempting Him said, "All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me," until the day when James and John asked permission to call down fire from heaven, our Lord was persistently presented with the thought of leaving "the way of

the Cross," and yielding to the desires of the thousands who longed to proclaim Him King. Consider what it meant for Christ to adhere so strictly to His resolve "to go to Jerusalem," to Gethsemane, to Calvary when the people were wanting to set Him on the throne of David! There was something to be said in favour of the popular demand. Did not the Jews need a king? Was not the Lord Christ a Jew? Was it not a standing disgrace for God's chosen people to be under a heathen power? Was not the time ripe for another Maccabeus to strike in the name of God? Ah, yes! The advocates of striking a popular but effective blow believed the opportune moment had arrived. What was more, Christ had been assured of the wholehearted support of the prince of this world if He would only yield to the popular demand.

This temptation still stands athwart the pathway of every ambassador of Christ. What things we could accomplish if we were in a different position! What reforms would be wrought if we could only enjoy popularity! But to live unknown, to walk the hard, unromantic highway seems not to be worth while. Young man! Jesus trod that way. He had all the power and glory of the world offered Him if He would consent to be popular, but He refused point-blank and "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." Doubtless we would have questioned His wisdom and prophesied His oblivion, but regardless of the

consequences He went on. He had the courage to be unpopular! He dared to be singular! "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." Our Lord did not despise popularity any more than He sought it. The popularity He enjoyed was well-deserved. He was not a time server, but a genuine lover of men. "He spake as one having authority and not as the scribes." He had a message from God and expressed Himself so clearly and with such conviction that officers sent to arrest Him were arrested by His eloquence, and returned to their masters saying, "Never man spake like this man." The beginning of His Galilean ministry was full of promise.

The news that the long expected Messiah had come was carried from lip to lip until the whole country rang with His name. He performed many wonderful miracles and the people flocked to see and hear Him. It seemed as though the Galileans had with one consent become Christians. But their Messianic hopes were grossly materialistic. It soon became evident that they were obsessed with the idea of a great political conquest. Believing the time ripe for revolt, they sought to force the issue by making Christ king. He deliberately refused to yield to their demand. He told them plainly that He was not a political agitator any more than He was a "Bread-king." This brought about a crisis, and those Galileans who had been His most ardent admirers received a sudden chill and forsook Him forthwith. They

were grievously disappointed in Him and became incensed against Him. This was a cruel turn in the tide of events. His labours in Galilee with a few noble exceptions had been in vain. Nazareth! so full of tender memories. Nazareth! where He had spent so many peaceful years treated Him shamefully. Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, on the shores of the silver lake, whose every field He had traversed, performing works of mercy, "and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom," they turned away from Him.

During the latter part of His ministry He had to encounter opposition from almost every conceivable quarter. Six months before He suffered He left Galilee and "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." When we consider all the agony of rejection behind and the fatal hour before who will hesitate to say that that journey is unique in the annals of our race? "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." On the way He was often absorbed in the thought of the stern reality ahead. At times the tension was so great that He quickened his gait and went on ahead of His disciples. "They were amazed, and as they followed, they were afraid." At other times, He went more deliberately. We see Him blessing little children. We also see Him among His friends at Bethany, but Jerusalem was His goal.

"He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," and when the hour struck on God's clock He was there. We hear His significant prayer:

"Father, the hour is come." "The hour!" How stupendous were the issues of that critical hour! We get a faint idea of what that hour meant to Him as we see Him in Gethsemane, as we behold His agony and hear Him cry, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." We hear footsteps, and at the head of a multitude armed with swords and staves, we see Judas. We see Jesus come forth, the supreme crisis past, a conqueror, and with regal mien He goes to give His life a ransom for many.

Men wax eloquent about deeds of daring, but where will you find a more sublime exhibition of Christian fortitude than is exhibited in the courage of the Christ? We glorify the heroes of war, and many courageous deeds have been performed in battle. But when we calmly consider all the facts we shall give the first place to the heroes of peace. Thousands of the heroes of peace have gone into the present struggle not because they love peace the less, but because they love honour more. It is Jesus who creates the latter type of hero and heroine. Scores of them move in and out among us. We do not recognize them, consequently we fail to appreciate their dignity and worth. But the crowning day is coming, then we shall marvel at our present inability to recognize those of whom the world is not worthy. Jesus Christ is the noblest example of moral courage the world has ever seen, and the most courageous

thing any man, woman, or child can do is to follow in His train. To renounce every idol, and to follow Jesus all the way, we need courage! To be Christian in principle and Christlike in practice we need courage! To live the Christian life as Christ lived it, we certainly need courage.

What is courage? Whatever it may be, it is not starting on some one less than ourselves. Yet we only need to scan the pages of history to see how many have become heroic on this principle. One of the glaring evils of history is that of lauding men who have been positive enemies of the human race. But the time has come when these so-called heroes should receive the execration they so richly deserve. To start on one less than yourself is not the act of a hero but of a coward. We have a ghastly illustration of this principle in the German invasion of Belgium. Germany may plead "military necessity," but a "military necessity" that deliberately tears up treaties and wantonly exposes a peace-abiding country to the barbarism to which Belgium has been subjected is a long way out of date. It is a crime and furthermore, it is doomed! By such an outrage Germany has stamped herself with a disgrace that time will never erase. The truly courageous man never plays the part of a bully, rather, he defends the weak, and when under provocation does not fly to nature's first aid of settling every dispute with his fists.

Again, courage does not necessarily mean to be

void of fear. Take two soldiers who have been to the front, and question them about their exploits. One laughs and says, "he didn't care," and as you consider his burly physical proportions and his iron will it really looks as though nothing could frighten him. He contends that he does not know what fear is. Such a man may have performed a thrilling deed, but his heroism is far from being of the highest order. Another soldier who startled the world by his achievement is very reticent; he does not want to talk about it. He admits it is like a nightmare to him, and to his bosom companion he confesses that he was afraid. He was so frightened that his nerves threatened to get the better of him, but he knew how much depended on his venture, and with a prayer to God for strength to do his duty, he went on! The first soldier's courage is not be despised, but the second soldier's courage is moral courage, and for such courage we should all devoutly pray. The primary lesson God would have us learn is to be courageous. Christian courage is moral courage with a Christian aim and motive. It is not ours by nature. Christian courage is imparted by Christ. When the Jewish authorities "saw the boldness of Peter and John they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

Christian courage is the courage of endurance. In the courageous example of our Lord, we discern these features among others—faith, obedi-

ence, patience and perseverance. If we would be partakers of the courage of the Christ we must enter His school, as would-be heroes, we must learn of Him. As heroic Christians, let us "steadfastly set" our faces to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." We need courage to enable us to triumph over difficulty, despondency and discouragement. These are real foes that we have to face every day. By difficulty I mean anything of an arduous or an embarrassing nature. If we have purposed in our hearts to live lives of uncompromising integrity, we will discover that we are on a rough up-hill road, and we will find ourselves in a great many embarrassing situations. It requires moral courage to say "no" to what is wrong and "yes" to Christ. It is hard to be truly Christian in conversation and conduct, but if we endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, we will become more Christlike, and what distinction is comparable to that! It is of the very nature of difficulty to inspire courage, besides giving us the opportunity of doing exploits.

Again, we require courage to conquer despondency. In the common, every-day routine of life, our trials and sufferings may so exhaust us that we are tempted to lose hope. We become depressed and live in the anticipation of an overwhelming calamity. Sometimes, with the best of intentions, we find it hard to rise to the occasion; we get somewhat unnerved. But what-

ever we do let us not be always looking for trouble. A great many of the evils we dread are more imaginary than real. When in Yorkshire, England, I heard a rather amusing story of a preacher whom I knew personally. It was in my first pastoral charge and I can hear him yet as he frequently and fervently prayed: "God bless the lad!" "God bless the lad!" How omnipotent the preacher feels when such petitions are presented on his behalf! Well, this dear old saint who has since gone Home was appointed to preach one Sunday evening at a country charge. In the gathering gloom he journeyed through the fields to complete his engagement. When he got so far through a certain field, he was alarmed to see a wild bull moving in his direction. He turned, took his heels, and ran. It is an awful experience to be chased by a wild bull, and in our imagination we can see the preacher making his exit over the fence as gracefully as the occasion would permit. But the preacher was not overtaken. It is really wonderful what speed preachers can get on, sometimes. Perspiring freely he hurried home and related his experience to some friends. Next morning a party set out to locate the bull and acquaint the owner of his nature. They found the field without any difficulty, but they could not find the bull. What they did see was a lonely calf which seemed very desirous of a little company. In the darkness things look frightfully big. It is more than

likely that the preacher had a wild bull in his imagination, and he saw one. Are not some of us living too far in the shade? That may account for our seeing so many things working against us.

Let us have courage to step out into the sunny paths of faith, and hope and love, and in at least nine cases out of ten we shall find that the wild bull is only a frolicsome calf. Set your face steadfastly to meet in a courageous spirit all the risks to which you may be exposed.

Finally we need courage to drive away discouragement. When I wanted to know what discouragement meant, I looked in the dictionary and learned that it meant, "to repress or prevent." Oh! what power discouragement exerts to hold us back! A young man says, "nobody takes pains to understand me." Perhaps there is very little to understand in him. He does not think of this and gets discouraged. Young man! Whether people take pains to understand you or not, make an honest attempt to understand yourself and master yourself. And such an accomplishment will set you higher in the moral realm than Alexander the Great who conquered the world, but was ignominiously defeated by himself. It is more than likely that you will require all your moral courage to defend your honour, to guard your morals, to retain your purity, and to forge your way through to a worthy place in the van of progress.

Shall we take another glance at our text? "He steadfastly set His face." Have you seen that face? You have heard others talk about it, but if you have not seen it for yourself gaze upon it now, and you will behold the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person. Gaze upon that face and you will lose your sins, your vanity, your timidity. And as you continue to gaze, your face will become Christ-like, your character will become God-like. You will develop that calm, purposeful resolution you see written upon His features, and you will steadfastly set your face to do His will. Shall we not, even now, resolve, by loyalty to Christ, to create a healthier moral atmosphere, to do what in our power lies to make it easier for our weak brother to do right than to do wrong? Our principles will be tested, and our courage will be challenged, but let our attitude be similar to the best blood of Scotland, as they stood around their King at Flodden:

"One by one they fell around him,
As the archers laid them low;
Grimly dying, still unconquered,
With their faces to the foe."

CHAPTER XIX

A GREAT SPECIALIST

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His Temple.—Ps. XXVII, 4.

THESE words express the highest ambition of the sons of God. They are the expression of a man who has proved the worth of a life of faith. He is not an amateur, rather he is a worthy veteran. He has experienced the rude shocks of life. Recently he has been in the dark. It may be the darkness of sin or sorrow from which he is emerging, for he confesses, "The Lord is my light and my salvation." He has been opposed or persecuted for he throws down the challenge, "Whom shall I fear?" In the attitude of a warrior ready for the fray he cries, "The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" His faith has been a refuge in time of trouble; a shield against the wicked, and a joy in peace and prosperity. He knows where to go when in trouble, he knows how to fight and prevail, and what is more he gives us the benefit of his experience. "For in the time

of trouble, He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me: He shall set me upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord."

How refreshing to meet a man whose religion is not merely a creed, or an orthodoxy, but a life! Not a sickly, half-starved life, but healthy, animated, and joyous.

But who was this man? The critics have discovered that David did not write all the Psalms. We need not be dismayed. We have the Psalms, and if David did not compose them all it goes to prove that instead of one, there was a whole host of sweet singers in Israel. David may have been an unusually good singer. He was above the average in ability and in piety, and possibly his whole-hearted devotion has been the prime factor in perpetuating his fame. Any man who serves God with all the enthusiasm of his being has the great probabilities in his favour of being a better workman whatever trade he ply. Thank God for the unnamed Psalmists in Israel! Thank God for the unrecorded heroes and heroines of Christ, men and women of whom the world is not worthy, who at this moment are edifying the world by the sweet melody of their lives!

Perhaps in three or four thousand years from now, the higher critics of that future age will be

criticising the psalms of to-day. Probably they will start out with the impression that Tennyson and Wordsworth and Longfellow wrote them all. Then they will discover many which are anonymous, and some wiseacre will publish a learned treatise announcing that "Tennyson and Wordsworth and Longfellow never lived." To prevent this blunder, let us put it on record that we are proud of our Christian poets, and, although we are not all Tennysons and Longfellows, we all sing the same songs. I am not sure whether all the critics are agreed as to who composed this Psalm, but if I rightly read the spirit of it, it is of Davidic origin. The language of our text, in which the Psalmist gives utterance to his earnest request, is so suggestive of that tenacity of purpose and so full of that whole-hearted abandonment, which is such an essential factor in the soul of every seeker after God, that I attribute it to the man after God's own heart. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His Temple."

Notice

I THE SIMPLICITY OF HIS REQUEST

"One thing have I asked of the Lord." The Psalmist saw the advantage of having an over-

ruling purpose in life, and he made his request for "one thing." Such a simple request is easily understood, and is more likely to be granted than when we hesitate in making our choice. The difficulty with most of us is that we have such a variety of aims and desires we are at a loss which to put in the first place. Many of our aims are transient, some trivial, and others fairly important. Our plea is that we are men of affairs and we cannot confine ourselves so as always to be thinking about religion. But the choice of this "one thing" is not limitation, it is true self-expression. The Psalmist had his affairs to attend to, but in all, through all, and above all, he had a master passion; he wanted "one thing." Doubtless this one thing included many lesser wishes, but his life, instead of being a series of contradictions, was a harmonious whole. Like tributaries finding an outlet in the river, and the river in the ocean, everything contributed to the supreme purpose of his being. We may have a diversity of aims, but it is our prerogative to see that all contribute to the all-controlling purpose of life. The Psalmist wanted one thing, and he knew what he wanted. In making our selection of the good things of life too many of us are like children, before Christmas, writing to Santa Claus, stating, "I want, I want," until there is no end of wants. We want too many things, but when a man knows what he needs, and says deliberately, "I want one thing," we are prepared

to listen. If that one thing is worthy of his manhood, God is prepared to listen, and what is more, God enters into partnership with that man, and the enduring nature of his achievements will eventually convince his fellows that he is backed by the power of omnipotence. If we desire to enter into such a partnership, we must be prepared to live the simple life. What a contrast is presented between the Psalmist and us! His life was simple, ours is complex. His wants were few, ours seem to be legion.

Mark you! Simplicity is not necessarily superficiality. A great many of us are superficial enough, when we consider how content we are to merely skim the surface of life, and to live almost entire strangers to those habits of life which helped our fathers to become seers, and our mothers to become saints. Our fathers were men of sturdy qualities. They were men of mental and moral caliber, and we are not surprised because they lived the simple life. They were frugal in their habits. They took time to meditate upon the meaning of life, and talked frequently and intelligently of the deep things of God. How entertaining and instructive it was to us, as we listened to the saints of a generation ago, while they conversed of those "things the angels desire to look into." These are among the most precious memories of former days, days never to be forgotten when our parents read the sacred page, and kneeling, talked with heaven's

eternal King. Alas for us! so many of us are living such superficial lives that we are afraid to speak of the religion we profess. Am I wrong in surmising an alarming lack of private prayer and meditation, that simple but certain nourisher of sainthood? Life has become so complex and boisterous now-a-days that we seem to be total strangers to the deep experiences of life. We rush forward headlong, and it looks as though everything must be sacrificed to speed. The luxury of one generation becomes the necessity of the next, and where will it end? Civilization first gives freedom and then enslaves. In the rush of modern civilization we cannot have all, so let us be content with what we need. Certain things we do require, others we may be better without. Amid the roar of the traffic, let us pause and ask ourselves what is really worth while, and like the Psalmist we shall resolve our desires from the complex to the simple and make our request for "one thing." Secondly notice,

II THE SINCERITY OF HIS REQUEST

"One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after." This qualifying clause reveals the sincerity of the Psalmist. He has asked not merely for "one thing," but he has set his heart on it, and determines to do what he can to get it. His attitude is suggestive of determination, endurance, and achievement. God honours the

faith of the earnest man. As we sometimes say, "God helps those who help themselves." It is only when we have given proof of our sincerity that God will do for us, "above all we ask or think." The Psalmist has his daily routine to go through, but every task is made subservient to this, "I will attend religiously to every detail of my work, but amid all that is trivial and menial, this 'one thing' I live for." If a man really wants anything worth while, he will dare to risk the loss of other things to specialize upon that. The Psalmist determines to become a specialist. It has been the same in every age. To-day we have specialists in every department of life, and any man who has risen to eminence has been a specialist along certain lines. What we need above all else to-day, in every department of life, is only too apparent; we need specialists in sainthood. The one thing worth living for is Christ-likeness, "to live so that Christ will approve our life." Enoch was a specialist. We are not in a position to say precisely what his occupation in life was, but we do know that, "he walked with God, and he was not for God took him." Samuel was a specialist. He specialized upon prayer. Was there ever a better judge in the land? How high his rugged personality towers above the ordinary when he cries, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." The disciples were specialists. Peter as their spokesman said, "Lo! we

have left all and followed Thee." St. Paul was a specialist, and how like the Psalmist in his attitude! "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The Puritans were specialists. They specialized, not upon accumulation, but upon the fear of God. To the Puritans, God was over all blessed forever, they feared Him and they feared none beside.

If we as young men are to lead the forlorn hope we must specialize, not necessarily in swordsmanship, but in sainthood. "If the trumpet shall give an uncertain sound who shall prepare himself for battle?" We demand sterling integrity in our leaders. We have a noble army of leaders to-day, but the ranks are thinning. There are many gaps to be filled. Up, young men! and claim your inheritance. We have Puritan blood in our veins, and we cannot suffer the ideals our fathers lived, and suffered, and died to realize to be ruthlessly destroyed. We are doubtless proud of our branch of the Christian Church, and if Presbyterianism has stood for anything at all, it has been the exponent of unswerving righteousness. Young men! specializing in sainthood is not the sickly, sentimental business some of you imagine it is. It is something that demands application. You cannot treat it lightly for it is your very life. If you

want to become a Christian hero, bend your energies, and say with the sweet singer of Israel, "that will I seek after." Seek that pearl of great price though it mean weariness and pain, though it mean bloodshed and tears, seek and you shall find. Finally and briefly notice:

III THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PSALMIST'S REQUEST

"One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His Temple." This is what the Psalmist wants. It is a worthy request and he dares to announce it. This proves that he was a man after God's own heart. How few dare to lay bare the uppermost and inmost longings of their hearts! The inmost desires of some of us might be no credit either to us, or to our Christian training. Are we longing for that which is unlawful or unseemly? Beware! You cannot take fire into your bosom and not be burned. Let your inmost longing be worthy of your self-respect, worthy of your parents, worthy of your country, and worthy of your God. The substance of the Psalmist's request is that he wants to dwell, to behold, and to inquire. This threefold request being granted would give any man the *summum bonum*, the supreme good of life. Man craves a home, and here is one man who wants to live with God. "That I may dwell

in the house of the Lord all the days of my life."

What does he mean? We must not take him too literally. Isaiah may help us. He says, "and it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." What is the meaning of this figurative language? Simply a statement of the sublime fact that wherever there is a child of God, there he may erect an altar, and even though the ground be hard and covered with stones he may like Jacob realize, that "this is none other than the house of God and this the gate of heaven." The house of God is where the worshipper bows in spirit and communes with God. The whole world is the house of God to the devout soul. Men who have sought to localize and monopolize God have entertained wrong views of Him. Our Lord's reply to the Samaritan woman was profoundly significant, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." The Psalmist had a longing for God amounting to an ardent passion. He wanted to be like God, and he rightly thought that the surest way to become like God was to live with Him, in the same house.

Further, He wanted to see "the beauty of the Lord." How grateful we should be for the faculty of vision! A great man has made the

interesting statement that eighty per cent. of our knowledge comes to us through the medium of our eyes. One thing is very evident, we see what we are looking for. The Psalmist wanted to penetrate to the heart of things, he wanted to concentrate his gaze upon the glory of the Shekinah. What a conception he had of God!—"to gaze upon the pleasantness of Jehovah." But magnificent as his conception was, we are even more highly favoured. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

What think ye of Christ? Men have complained that there was no beauty in Him that we should desire Him. His visage was marred. Yet some have looked until they declared Him to be "the fairest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." In Him we see truth in its beauty, love in its purity, and holiness in its winsomeness. Have you, like John, "beheld His glory?"

Finally, the Psalmist says he wants "to inquire." Man is a big interrogation mark. God has set eternity in our hearts and we are born inquirers. We all ask questions, but the pity is that so many of us are inquiring about the transient or the base. "Wherewithal shall I be clothed?" or fed? Shall I pull down my barns and build greater? Child of time, build for eternity. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow

of the Almighty." "Inquire in His Temple!" In the olden days people went to inquire of the Lord about everything. It was an inquiry of a domestic nature that led Saul to his kingdom. Hannah inquired of the Lord. Samuel was born, and who will say that she inquired in vain? This is true worship, that we consult God in everything. Such worship edifies. By frequent communion we receive fresh stimulus and encouragement. Such worship enlightens. Do we need pardon? "Ask and ye shall receive." Do we need guidance? "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Such worship equips for the daily task. So let us determine to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Amen.

CHAPTER XX

A NATIONAL TRINITY

And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray Thee open his eyes, that he may see.—II Kings VI, 17.

IN our text we have a trinity who unite in providing one of the most fascinating chapters in Jewish history. Fortunate indeed is the nation boasting such a trinity and where each of its three persons are had in becoming reverence and esteem. The nation void of this trinity or lacking any one of these three may well start at the sight of the handwriting upon the walls of its most enduring institutions, for its days are numbered and its overthrow in sight.

The first person in this trinity is The Lord. "And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray Thee." The most casual observer could not fail to recognize that there was a God in Israel. This was the most conspicuous fact in the history of that remarkable people. This thought gripped every Jew and gave him such poise and power as made him both the envy and the admiration of mankind. Other nations boasted a pantheon, a whole procession of gods, but the Jew was not

envious. Had he not proved what the modern world with all its scientific research and its evolutionary theories has never disproved that "all the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens." This fundamental tenet of the Jewish faith was imparted to each succeeding generation. Every Jewish child was told and retold of God, His Being, Power, and Choice, until the idea gripped him and thrilled him; he was one of an elect nation, "chosen of God and precious." God was their King, their Provider, and Defender. When they marched against their enemies it was in the firm assurance that God led them on. If it was a righteous battle their enemies were routed. If it was an unrighteous battle they were defeated and chastened. Thus nothing could stand before the dauntless courage of those who charged amid the strains of the warrior psalm:

"God is our refuge and our strength,
In straits a present aid;
Therefore although the earth remove,
We will not be afraid."

There was a God in Israel. Is there a God in Britain? The history of the British Empire has been quite as remarkable as that of Israel. When our history as a people is complete, it will read like a romance. To the serious students of history our own is coming to be recognized as a

romance of faith. Every historic event in the United Kingdom has left a record so plain that he who runs may read that there is a God in Britain. Early in the Christian era, the gospel was preached in the mother country. The seed was sown in good ground and is bringing forth a harvest that will continue to be reaped until the angel shall set one foot on sea and the other on land, and proclaim that time shall be no more. Rising from a mere handful of God-fearing citizens, the British Nation has grown to be an empire upon which the sun never sets. Innumerable factors have contributed to this result, factors which we gratefully acknowledge, but the supreme factor that has made this brilliant achievement possible is God. Our late beloved Queen Victoria expressed our imperial sentiments most aptly when, lifting a copy of the Scriptures, she said "this is the secret of England's greatness." In the steadfast adherence of the British Empire to the cause of righteousness, and in her rôle as a herald of the Evangel, we have conclusive evidence that there has been a God in Britain, but can that assertion be made without fear of contradiction in the living present?

Is there a God in Canada to-day? Israel fulfilled her mission, and Britain is in the zenith of her glory, while in Canada we are laying the foundations of an empire within an empire. When we consider the area, the natural and min-

eral resources of the Dominion, together with the rapidity with which thousands are seeking homes in our beloved land, we rightly anticipate a tremendous future. It is the overwhelming conviction of all who have the highest interests of the Dominion at heart that if ever a country needed the presence and superintendence of a God, we need a God in Canada to-day. Yes! There is a God in Canada. This is God's country, and thousands of the best blood of our land have sworn, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord." There is a God in Canada, and He is going to win the day. There are those who would like to contradict this assertion, and many evils thrive in defiance. Because of these we mourn, but we do not despair. Their days are numbered! Even now, the ranks are filling, and the prayer ascending, "Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered." I warn you who are inclined to sneer "there is no God in Canada," to change your attitude from that of cynicism and indifference to one of joyful recognition and appreciation. God will vindicate His honour and lay bare His mighty arm. Slowly but surely He is eliminating the bad and establishing the good. But you ask, "How do these statements harmonise with the present war?" We deplore the necessity of war, but where honour and righteousness are involved we do not hesitate. Great Britain is at war because of a choice between two evils, the evil of going to war, and the greater

evil of peace with dishonour. The Psalmist said, "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." Listen to the words of Jeremiah. His words were never more significant than they are to-day. "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."

The second person in this trinity is The Prophet. "And Elisha prayed and said, O Lord I pray Thee." Next to the Lord, the most conspicuous part in Israel was played by the prophet. It was necessary for God to communicate His wishes to the sons of men, and the prophet was the spokesman of God. The prophets of Israel were both human and divine. They kept their eyes upon the great white throne, and this intensified their interest in the national weal. To prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah who had to prophesy of their country's downfall their task was a heartbreak, and how eagerly they turn from national disaster to the glory of the latter days! All the prophets of Israel were great personalities, and although ranging from the

lofty grandeur of Moses to the uncompromising fidelity of Samuel, from the rugged spendour of Elijah to the meek simplicity of Elisha, they were equally attractive. For such a prophetic succession we most humbly and devoutly pray.

The prophet is one who hears, who sees, and who speaks. He has learned the fine art of listening. God speaks, frequently and eloquently, but the majority do not heed. They are so pre-occupied that they do not hear. As in the days of our Lord, when God speaks, there are those who testify that it thundered, while others come much nearer the truth by declaring that "an angel spake." The prophet is not disturbed by the earthquake and the fire for behind them he can distinguish the "still small voice." What we need to cultivate more and more in these days of rush and bustle is the art of listening. How easy it is to interpret the message of God when we have learned how to hear.

The prophet is one who sees! He penetrates the unseen. Before all, and in all, and over all, he sees God, and he sees the national policy together with individual motives in the light of the great white throne.

The prophet speaks! He does not speak at random but under divine guidance. How often in history when every other voice has been silenced the prophet has spoken in clear, ringing tones, and not only saved the situation, but transformed national misgiving into a great mission-

ary opportunity. When Naaman, the Syrian, presented himself before the king of Israel and requested to be cleansed of his leprosy, the king "rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? Wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me." And when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, he sent to the king, saying, "Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."

The message of the prophet in the old dispensation was national in its bearing, while the message of the modern prophet has no regard for international boundaries, but is of universal significance. The modern prophet is a Christian imperialist and in the name of the Father of the spirits of all flesh, he speaks to every nation under heaven. While we esteem our army and navy highly in love for their works' sake, let us recognize the preëminence of the prophet as a guardian of our shores.

The third person in this trinity is The Young Man. "And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw." The young man is an indispensable element in this trinity. Her young men are a nation's most valuable assets. As a nation the Jews

had a high regard for their young men. David and Jonathan, Daniel and Nehemiah, are illustrious examples of that religious patriotism which had been instilled into their youthful minds, which was their motive-power, and which gave them a permanent place in the hall of fame. Great Britain is under an enormous obligation to her young men. Lord Clive was a reckless boy when he sailed for India. There one bitter experience succeeded another until disappointed and dejected he spent his remaining money in purchasing a revolver with which to take his life. Twice he held the weapon to his temple and pulled the trigger and twice it failed to discharge. It clicked, but would not go off. Throwing the weapon down upon the table and himself into a chair, he did some hard thinking. Presently a friend entered the room. Clive said, "Take that, and fire through the window!" He did so! There was a loud report, and Clive, springing to his feet cried, "I think I am reserved for something great!" And so it proved. He conquered India, and placed in the British Crown one of its most precious gems.

A number of years ago the members of the War Office in London were debating the prospects of a certain venture. They sent for their oldest general and asked him his opinion. He said it was simply impossible. Then they sent for the next in order and so on until they reached the youngest general they had. And they

said, "Wolfe, can you win Canada for Great Britain?"

Wolfe replied, "I'll do it or die." He did it, and he died, but he did it nevertheless. Won by a young man, Canada is a young man's country. Throughout the Dominion young men are attaining to the most responsible positions, and gracing them both by efficiency and success. This is preëminently the young man's day, and every young man should prepare assiduously for the position in life he may be called upon without previous warning to fill.

The whole civilized world is gazing intently upon the present crisis in Europe. Every man of genuine worth feels that this is a young man's fight. Young men have been entrusted with the most responsible positions in the government, in the army, in the navy, and they are acquitted themselves in a manner that leaves nothing to be desired. And what of the men in the trenches? We see the brave young men of England, Ireland, and Scotland, we see the swarthy sons of India, the sturdy sons of Africa, the gallant sons of Australasia, and our noble Canadian young men who have added another illustrious chapter to our youthful history. The call is for young men of mental and moral caliber in every department of life to rise in their might and usher in the order that is to be. Young man, "who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

"And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray Thee open his eyes that he may see." The glory of this trinity is seen to better advantage when we consider the time it was united for action. It was a time of national peril. The feud between Israel and Syria was one of long standing. There had been frequent skirmishes made by the Syrians which were extremely annoying. But during the reign of the present monarch, Benhadad II, these had developed into an organized campaign. It was Benhadad's ambition to effect the complete subjection of Samaria. He confided his plan of campaign to his officers who maintained the utmost secrecy and repeatedly they tried to surprise and capture the king of Israel, but without success. Their plans were frustrated in a way that was hard to account for. The key to the situation was held by the prophet. "And the man of God sent to the king of Israel, saying, 'Beware that thou pass not such a place: for thither the Syrians are come down.' And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice." His designs were thwarted so completely that Benhadad suspected treachery, and in an agony of bewilderment, he cried, "'Will ye not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?' And one of his servants said, 'None, my lord, O King: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bed-

chamber." The mystery explained the rest was quite easy. Capture and despatch the prophet and then the conquest of Israel would only be a question of time. So without delay, Benhadad sent horses and chariots and a great host to Dothan, and they came by night and compassed the city about. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" The young man was at his wit's end. They had been caught like rats in a trap. And with a cry of dismay, he rushed into the presence of the prophet. They were in a terrible plight. From a human standpoint their capture had been effected. Escape was impossible. The young man saw that reliance upon human resources was out of the question, and a very instructive feature of this story is that the young man runs instinctively to the prophet.

This is precisely what we want our young men to do. We want to cultivate your acquaintance. You need us and we need you. There are those who endeavour to divorce you from the Christian church, by speaking disparagingly of the church and its ministry, but exercise a care, lest for bread you receive a stone. It is easy to criticise, it is easy to pull down, but not so easy to build up. The Christian ministry, the modern school of the prophets, does not claim to be a

perfect institution, and no one is readier to acknowledge this than those who have entered this holy calling. But as a class, and especially where they have exercised the function of the prophet, they have invariably championed the cause of righteousness, and challenged the Goliaths of oppression to combat in the open field. Depend upon it, the prophet is a man, he is a man of God, and as such he is your friend. He has eyes to see, a heart to feel, and is always willing to lend a helping hand. Those men who have lost faith in God and in all existing institutions, and who are red hot for revolution, may impress you with their vehemence, but they are false prophets. What can they offer as a substitute? They have no God! no Christ! They have no spiritual perspective. They are of the earth earthy, and no matter how plausible their arguments, they are officers of Benhadad. Given a free hand they would eliminate worship and strike in their frenzy at the pillars of the great white throne. If they have a panacea let them go out into the highways and byways, where the church goes, and from thence rally their standards and not deplete the armies of the living God.

In the hour of peril there was only one place to go, and with dismay written upon his features, the young man burst into the chamber of the prophet and cried, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" The prophet's reassuring "Fear not"

perplexed him until he prayed that remarkable prayer, "Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw." A new world burst upon his vision! "The mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

The tables were turned. Their enemies were hopelessly outnumbered. Young men! Do you know anything of that world and its forces which enabled the prophet to be calm in the hour of panic? Do you know anything of that magnificent world to which St. Paul refers, when he prays, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able—may be able—to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God?" The Lord! The Prophet! and The Young Man! What achievements have been wrought by these three, and what signal triumphs yet await them!

There is something more commendable than what was accomplished by Clive. It is to lead those millions of people in India, who are ready for the gospel message, to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. There is something with issues infinitely more tremendous than what was accomplished by Wolfe, it is to win Canada for Christ. There is something even greater than

the overthrow of military despotism, it is the recognition of, and unswerving loyalty to Christ the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Will you subscribe to this trinity now? Amen.

CHAPTER XXI

A CHALLENGE TO CIVILIZATION

Gird ye on every man his sword.—I Sam. XXV, 13.

DAVID was a fugitive but not of justice, he was in exile through no crime of his own. He was discovered in a national crisis. Under God he had become the champion of his native land. Because of his signal achievements and modest demeanour, he became the object of royal jealousy. Jealousy engendered hatred, and hate deliberately contemplated murder. Saul determined to kill David who wisely sought refuge in flight. He kept moving from place to place, for Saul with a zeal worthy of a better cause was hot in pursuit. The fugitive was not overtaken, but by his indiscretion, the king endangered his own life. On more than one occasion David had Saul at his mercy, but he refused to strike, he refrained from lifting his hand against the Lord's anointed.

David by his conduct in his banishment proved himself a gentleman. That he was a gentleman of a very high order is attested by the fact that while the men who rallied to his standard,—

"every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented,"—while these men were naturally of a lawless type, he restrained them from all such depredations as make such bands a menace to any law-abiding community. Even though in jeopardy and hunted as an arch-traitor, he never hesitated to wield his sword in his country's cause. Wherever he sought refuge, the people, instead of complaining because of any misdemeanour, were loud in their praise of David and his men. Amid the rocks and caves of Carmel, they enjoyed a brief respite and endeared themselves to the shepherds of Nabal, a wealthy farmer living in Maon. In this mountainous region, the shepherds were exposed to the raids of bandits who lived by plunder. While David and his men were there, the shepherds enjoyed security. The appreciation of the shepherds was ably expressed. "The men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we anything, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields: They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep."

When Nabal was shearing his sheep David, who had to battle with hardship and poverty, sent greetings, and requested a favour in consideration for his services. It was a very modest request, simply a request for something to eat. "And Nabal answered David's servants, and

said, ‘Who is this David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master. Shall I take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?’ ”

David’s young men returned and related Nabal’s insolent reply. “And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword.” Such base insolence merited immediate action, and men of the calibre of David were not to be trifled with. Not content with declining to meet David’s wishes, Nabal added insult to injury. His reply was a challenge which did not have long to wait for acceptance. “And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword.” There are situations in which we are placed by the tragedy of circumstances, by an unexpected turn of events, which call forth the injunction “Gird ye on every man his sword.”

On the second day of August, 1914, the whole civilized world stood aghast when Germany deliberately tore up her treaty which guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium and prepared to pass through that little unoffending country in a swift move on to Paris. Her strategists decided that this was the shortest and quickest route. Taking this path they would soon strike an effective blow. It is now over two and a half years since they set out for Paris and despite their haste, the Germans are not there yet. The shortest route

sometimes proves to be the longest road. What was the attitude of King Albert when he heard of this proposed outrage? He sent an appeal to England calculated to move hearts of stone, and without waiting for a reply he turned resolutely to his soldiers and said, "Gird ye on every man his sword." The part played by the dauntless sons of Belgium during the first few weeks of the war will stand as one of the most illustrious deeds in the annals of men. When Great Britain who was bound by the same solemn international treaty as Germany heard of this violation, and remembered her own moral obligations, what did she do? Did she, like Germany, tear up the treaty and refer to it as a scrap of paper? No! We are a peace-loving people, we had much to lose and little to gain by going to war, and besides we were unprepared for war. But our illustrious monarch never hesitated. Turning to his men he said, "Gird ye on every man his sword." Convinced of the righteousness of the cause for which they were to fight, the response to the Country's call is without a parallel in history. The contemptible 300,000 rapidly rose to an army of 5,000,000 men.

As a nation we never have regretted the steps we have taken. In the memorable words of Mr. Asquith, "We are fighting to fulfil a solemn international obligation and to vindicate the principle that small nationalities are not to be crushed, in defiance to international good faith, by the arbi-

trary will of a strong and overmastering power. I do not believe any nation ever entered into a great controversy—and this is one of the greatest history will ever know—with a clearer conscience and stronger conviction that it is fighting, not for aggression, not for the maintenance of its own selfish interest, but that it is fighting in defence of principles, the maintenance of which is vital to the civilization of the world." The many changes which have taken place, the vital questions which have had to be answered have been startling in their significance.

After two years of the strain imposed by this unique situation, Mr. Asquith resigned as Premier, and Mr. Lloyd George took hold of the reins of Government. We admire both Mr. Asquith and his work, but in Mr. Lloyd George we recognize "one of the biggest men God ever made." He is a God-fearing man and he fears none beside. He has deep convictions regarding right and wrong, and what is more, he has the courage of his convictions. He enjoys the confidence of soldier and civilian alike. When we consider his political career, when we remember his strenuous efforts on behalf of righteousness and peace, we may reasonably conclude it was no mere chance that placed him at the helm of the ship of state in such a treacherous sea. Mr. Lloyd George has resolutely opposed war. We respect his stand during the war in South Africa, but it did not take this master statesman long to

see that the present struggle was no common fight. After seeing every available means for averting bloodshed rudely rejected, he set to work. What we owe to the indefatigable efforts of this one man would be difficult to estimate.

One of the first duties he had to perform as prime minister was to consider a peace offer made in Germany. According to that peace offer, Germany was to be acknowledged a victor and further she refused to state her terms of peace. It has since resolved itself more into a trap than a genuine offer of peace. What was Mr. George's reply? This modern David, in conjunction with our brave allies, said, "Gird ye on every man his sword." More recently events have moved apace.

We have just lived through one of the most eventful weeks (January 28 to February 3, 1917) this continent has ever known. At the beginning of the week we were considering President Wilson's program for world peace. It was a courageous utterance, a fascinating dream. Many of us expressed our views regarding it. Some said, it was not in the realm of practicability, while others hoped to see it adopted. When, lo! at the end of the week the American Republic is on the verge of war. The Germans practically have delivered an ultimatum to all neutrals and the outlook is very grave. The sudden crisis with which the United States is confronted opens up the whole question of the war and Germany's

recent move virtually becomes a challenge to civilization. President Wilson should have our sympathy and prayers in this crisis. It would be a serious thing to plunge a nation of a hundred million people into war, especially a nation composed of so many nationalities, but there is something even more serious, and that is for a nation to lose its soul.

“Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side;
Some great cause, God’s new Messiah, offering each the bloom or blight,
Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the sheep upon the right,
And the choice goes on forever twixt that darkness and that light.”¹

It is highly desirable that a great nation like the United States of America should command and retain the respect of the civilized world. If President Wilson meets this challenge by turning to his people and saying, “Gird ye on every man his sword,” no one will be able to charge him with rashness. He has been so patient and persistent in his pacific course that we considered war a stranger to these coasts, when, lo! the unexpected happens, and war is at our very doors. If

¹ James Russell Lowell.

this world war is not a fight between Christ and Apollyon, I don't know what is. It is a momentous struggle, it is filling the whole horizon, but considering it in the light of the great moral law, it is only one phase of a war that is as old as time. As one startling situation is succeeded by another, we cannot adopt the attitude of interested spectators. If we would win the unfading crown of manhood and womanhood, we must get into the struggle and determine that everything relative to despotism will be challenged and given no quarter whether it reveals itself in church or state. We are all in this fight, and the sooner we realize the tremendous issues depending upon our waging a good warfare, the better. Some people maintain, we never should fight. As we review the horrors of war, we pray earnestly for peace. I hate war and all that leads to it, but with all reverence I reply that we must *always* fight. Everything depends on what we are fighting for, what we are fighting with, and the spirit in which we are doing our fighting.

The question no doubt will be asked, "Will the United States be justified in going to war?" Was David justified when he said to his men, "Gird ye on every man his sword?" To answer this question intelligently we must consider

THE CHARACTER OF NABAL

He was a great man. "And the man was very great." Greatness is a relative term.

There is a greatness which is synonymous with goodness, and there is a greatness which is synonymous with social prestige. Nabal was great but not in the sight of the Lord. Germany was beginning to impress the world by the greatness of her scientific achievements, and she has made certain contributions to our modern knowledge which entitle her to the designation "great." Nabal was great in his possessions. He had 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats. His possessions gave him his place in society as a man of wealth. Before the war, Germany had great possessions and an increasing asset in her universal trade. Commercially she was very great. If Nabal was great in his wealth, he was even greater in his opportunity. The responsibility of a rich man is grave. His social position gives him a great opportunity for righteousness; and what an opportunity Germany had for good by virtue of her position, few can estimate.

If Nabal was "very great" in his opportunity he was still greater in his traditions. He was a descendant of Caleb. The traditions of both nations and men are a heritage and by no means to be despised, especially if they are honourable. As we look at Caleb, that sturdy warrior, so inflexible in his adhesion to the utter right at the end of the Canaan campaign choosing the hill country for his inheritance that he might continue to prove his steel and retain the joy of conquest—as we gaze upon such an ideal veteran,

we anticipate great things for his descendants. That hill country was sacred ground. Every foot of it had been won by the sword of the Lord and of Caleb. Nabal was "very great" in his traditions.

What shall we say of the traditions of Germany? What country can boast of more promising traditions? We turn with sparkling eyes to the land of Luther. And considering his matchless power in his day and generation, we would expect Germany to be a land of prophets. But of Germany as of another nation it can be stated mournfully that she knew not the time of her visitation.

Finally Nabal was greatest in his folly. Nabal was his name and folly was his nature. However Germany regards her undue haste in plunging the world into war I know not, but this I do know, history will regard it as an act of madness without a parallel. Nabal's folly is seen in his reply to David's young men. As we examine his reply we discern that Nabal was great in his haughtiness. "Who is this David?" It was not altogether what he said but how he said it. Haughtiness is a sin from which we must all pray to be delivered. Great men and great nations sometimes take too much for granted and consequently over-reach themselves. They seem to think they can bully persecuted Davids at pleasure, but history bids them beware.

Nabal's reply betrayed his ignorance. "Who

is this David? He did not appear to know that had it not been for David, in the most critical hour of their national life, the armies of Israel would have been routed and the Philistines would have been the owners of his sheep. "Who is this David?" How base his ingratitude! His flocks had been so well protected in the hill country that he was greatly indebted to David and his men, and the least he could reasonably expect to do was to make a few inquiries regarding the circumstances of those well-disposed individuals who had been to his shepherds "a wall by night and day."

Finally, Nabal's reply proved that he was great in his scorn. "Who is this David?" You do not know? Then you soon will, for he is even now preparing a most impressive introduction. "And David said unto his men, 'Gird ye on every man his sword.'" Whether a nation is justified in going to war with another nation depends on one or two things. Who are they negotiating with, and what are they likely to fight for? If you are dealing with men who have no regard for veracity, no sense of honour, and who deliberately plan to inspire horror by striving persistently to destroy every principle of righteousness, the sooner you gird on your swords the better.

But if the latest German threat is a challenge to civilization, more than the United States are affected. Every civilized nation as well as every

civilized individual is affected. What is going to be our attitude? We are watching other neutral nations with interest, but while awaiting their decision, let us not forget to record our own. The attitude of our brave soldiers leaves nothing to be desired. They have gone and many of them have made the supreme sacrifice, but what of ours? This challenge is a clear call to the Christian Church. To every soldier of Jesus Christ the command is given by David's greater son, "Gird ye on every man his sword." The sacred cause of Freedom, the very foundation of the great white throne is threatened, and it was the contemplation of evils such as are symbolized in Prussian despotism that led Jesus to say, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." When freedom and honour and righteousness are at stake it is the Prince of Peace who says, "he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one."

In its final analysis, a nation is the unit writ large. As citizens we are in a measure responsible for our national ideals. Into the fair garden of Germany, so ably cultivated by Luther, an enemy came and sowed tares while the Church was asleep. For forty years that pernicious seed has been taking root and now behold the harvest. Civilization has been challenged. Every Christian must have felt the force of this affront. In this great Armageddon we adopt a neutral atti-

tude at our peril. Whether our lot be cast in the home, the church or the state let us gird on every man his sword. Have we no worthy traditions? Was the struggle at Runnymede a mere stageplay? By all that is holy I charge you to get into this fight. If we altogether hold our peace when all that our fathers held sacred and fought and died for is threatened with extinction—if we altogether hold our peace in this appalling time—it is enough to make our fathers turn in their graves.

O you Christian Canadians to the gap!

“As Christ died to make men holy
As Christ died to make men free”

let us recognize that even in this great and terrible war God is marching on. In His name let us take immediate issue with everything that “loveth and maketh a lie.” An effective weapon has been put into our hands: “the sword of the spirit which is the word of God.”

As parents let us inculcate into the minds of our children the sacredness of truth, the supremacy of conscience, the glory of freedom, and the grandeur of righteousness. As patriotic citizens, let us gird on every man his sword in dealing with the great question of education. Ideas rule the world. It is a suicidal policy to imagine that any kind of education will do for the rising generation.

If we had all wielded the sword of the spirit without intermission, no nation however great would have dared to challenge civilization as Germany has done. It is not merely out of date, it is perilous to wink at evil or to ignore unrighteousness. All that makes for oppression and despotism, all that makes for selfishness and injustice should meet with prompt action by every lover of God and hater of iniquity. By the love of God, our Father, by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, by the sufferings of our modern heroes, I beseech you to realize that we are not engaged in a sham fight, that we are not to speculate regarding this challenge; but for the sake of the past to achieve victory in the present and insure security in the future, we are urged to obey the injunction, "Gird ye on every man his sword."

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